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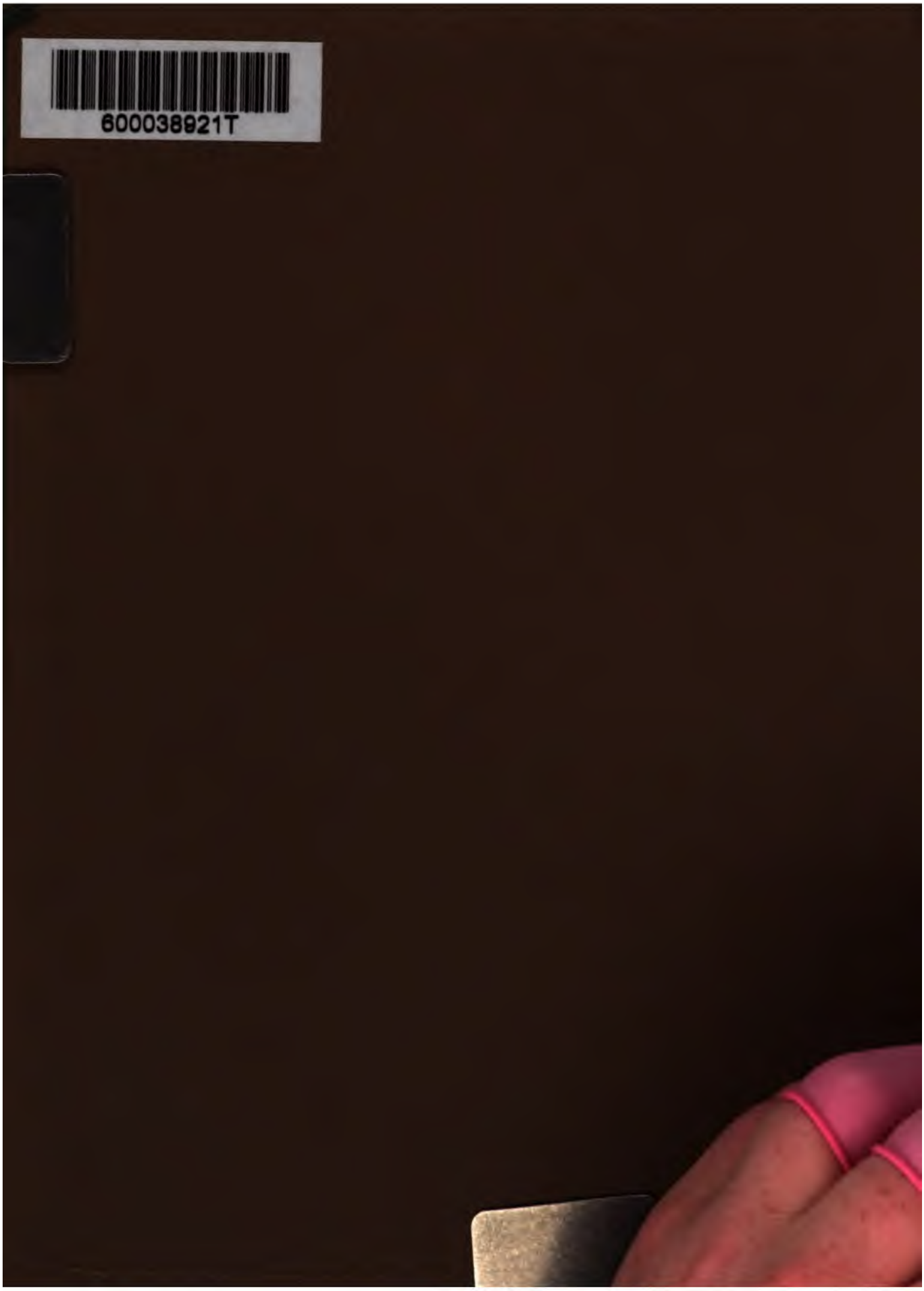

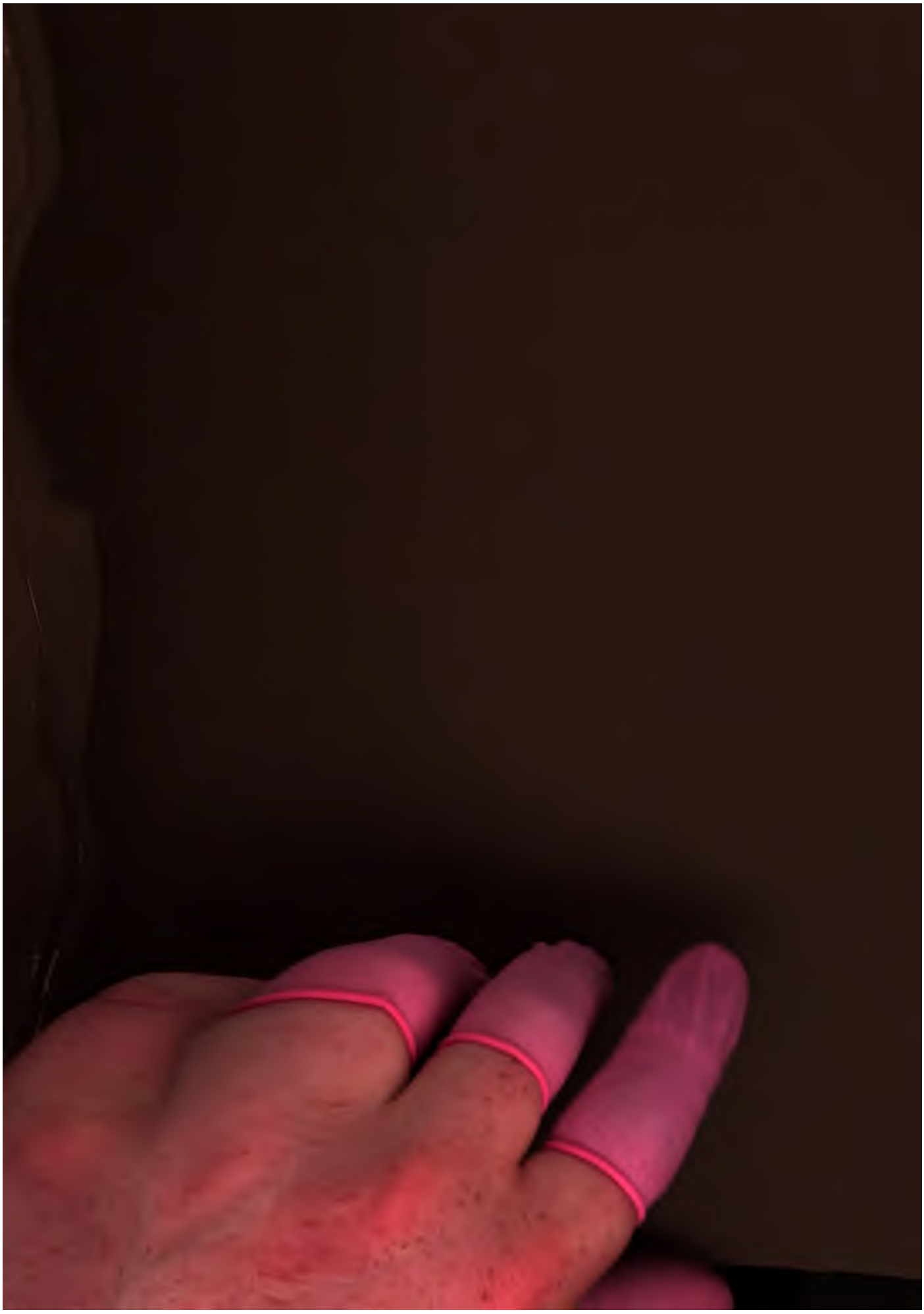

TITIAN'S COUNTRY.

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AND PARLIAMENT STREET

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TITIANS BRIDGE.

CADORE

OR

TITIAN'S COUNTRY.

BY

JOSIAH GILBERT,

ONE OF THE AUTHORS OF 'THE DOLOMITE MOUNTAINS'

ETC.

'There is a strange under-current of everlasting murmur about his name which means the deep consent of all great men that he is greater than they.' J. RUSKIN, *Two Paths.*

'A traveller who has visited all the other mountain-regions of Europe, and remains ignorant of the scenery of the Dolomite Alps, has yet to make acquaintance with Nature in one of her loveliest and most fascinating aspects.' J. BALL, *Guide to the Eastern Alps.*

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1869.

203. f. 133.

TO THE

DEAR COMPANION OF THE JOURNEY OF LIFE,

AS OF EACH ALPINE RAMBLE,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

BY

HER VERY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND.

PREFACE.

LED in the first instance to Cadore by the course of my wanderings among the Dolomite Mountains, the charm and the interest of the country drew me there again and again. The charm is due to a touch of Italian softness tempering Alpine severity and Dolomite grandeur. The interest centres in Titian. The scenery of Cadore and its neighbourhood inspired Titian's landscape; its remote villages still treasure in their churches relics of his pictures; its annals supplied him with the subject of one of his greatest, though, as it has long perished, one of his least known compositions; while to us they curiously illustrate the life of a small mountain republic from the earliest times.

To enable others to participate, so far as may be, in the pleasure I have experienced in rambling over the country; in searching out its history; above all in tracing its influence upon the life and genius of Titian; has been the intention of the following pages.

The Illustrations, drawn with a pen upon stone, and lacking the effect and delicacy of etchings, as well as the skill of a more practised hand, will yet, it is hoped, sufficiently serve their purpose; while the copy of Titian's original design for his 'Battle of Cadore' possesses, it is believed, a value of its own.

MARDEN ASH: *May* 1, 1869.

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CADORE.

CHAPTER I.

TITIAN'S HOUSE IN VENICE.

Venice south and north—A visit to Titian's house—Its history—Titian's household—Titian's friends—A certain supper—The mountain prospect, and the native peak—Titian's death.

EVERYONE who has visited Venice is familiar with the gay pleasure side open to the sunny south, and the vista of islands floating in a lustrous haze. This is Venice as it lives a lovely picture in the memory. This is the Venice of modern art—of Turner and of Ruskin. This is the Venice of history—of Dandolo and Faliero. Here her fleets assembled, whether for commerce or for war; here her doges and her nobles showed their state, or met in council; here, round the tall Campanile of St. Mark, flowed for ages the brilliant life of Venice; and here the faded Bride still bestows her welcome on the stranger.

The northern side offers no such picture, is warmed by no such memories. It is but now and then that the

traveller's gondola shoots out upon the northern water, and he finds himself among wharves, and barracks, and isolated churches, bits of gardens, backs of houses, uncomfortable walls stained here and there with decaying frescoes, sharers in the general dilapidation. Yet this was once a fashionable quarter; here was a favourite promenade, and here Titian lived.

This alone ought to redeem it from neglect, and considering the numbers in these days to whom Titian is more than a name, the many with whom as the prince of Venetian art he stands the rival of the proudest among Venetian doges and captains—who feel indeed that Venice herself, while the fabric of her merchant princes was crumbling upon her shores, lived on in splendour by means of her painters in every treasure-house of art—it is strange that it has not done so.

It is stranger still, while it explains the cause of the neglect, that till within the last few years the abode of 'Il divino Tiziano,' as his countrymen love to call him, was so lost sight of that biographers and enquiring travellers alike reported it entirely unknown. The identification dates from the year 1833; but as the particulars are contained in an Italian pamphlet familiar only to those interested in such matters, the spot has remained in much the same obscurity as before.

But while this forgotten house was that in which the greater portion of his great life was passed; where the thoughts came to him, which he wrought into

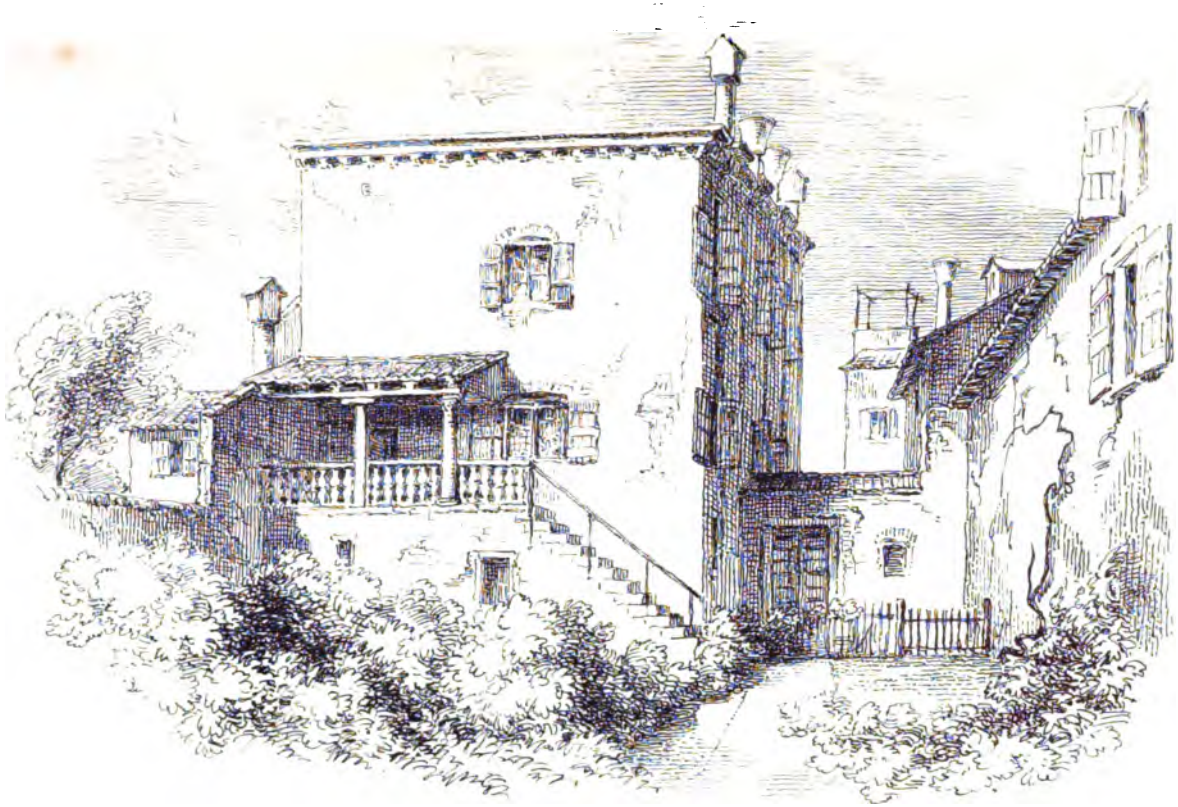
glorious shapes that the world worships; where at last he died; it does not possess the interest of his birthplace. That is not to be found in Venice. Titian was not even a blood Venetian. He was not a son of the lagune, but, like nearly all his contemporaries or followers in the so-called Venetian school, a continental. They were men of Castelfranco, Conegliano, Pordenone, Bassano, Verona, Brescia, Bergamo; all on the neighbouring mainland of Venice; and he was a man of Cadore; in this again distinguished as emphatically a man not of the plains, but of the mountains. Mountain air was the first he breathed, and mountain air he yearly breathed afresh. Mountains and forests were his favourite themes. Venice indeed gave him culture, it was Venice atmosphere that fed his eye with colour; Venetian splendour that made his art so courtly; but the double source of his inspiration must not be lost sight of, and after a preliminary glance at Titian in his Venice home, our principal object in these pages will be to follow him to his native mountains, and view him in their midst—their central figure, their great illustrator, Cadore's greatest son.

Although Titian's house has been identified, do not expect to find it easily. If you have no better fortune than myself, you will, after giving your gondolier a deal of trouble to find that part of the parish of S. Canciano called 'Biri,' and still more that part of Biri called 'Campo Tiziano,' discover a narrow court, lined

by small new-looking houses on one side, and closed at the end by a garden door, bearing the number you are in quest of, 5,526. The neighbours will tell you that the row of houses is Titian's house; and if you insist upon expecting better things behind the garden door, your pertinacious ringing will probably only bring a furtive head or two to a window, and it will be whispered that the signora there does not like visitors. If then you work round by the sea, and try the other side, you will only reach a dead wall enclosing the garden, and be told the house no longer exists! That mysterious door! Yet we are not without means of knowing something of what was, and is, behind it. In a lithograph accompanying the work above alluded to by the Abbate G. Cadorin, published in Venice in 1833,* we have apparently exactly what we want, and may suppose ourselves introduced into the garden itself, and standing opposite the end of the afore-mentioned small row of houses, against which a flight of steps leading up to a kind of loggia or balcony forms the entrance to that portion of the building occupied by Titian.

Let any one enter there who can; but if he cannot, let him—as I did upon a subsequent visit, when the answer to be obtained at No. 5,526 was, that they were particularly occupied that day—let him, I say, subsidize a friendly artizan in one of the tall houses overlooking the garden wall. The view from this

* 'Dello Amore ai Veneziani di Tiziano Vecellio.'



Tilians House in Venice
from the sketch in Cadorin

man's window will discover that the house and garden are indeed identical with the sketch in Cadorin, but that the loggia and flight of steps have been removed, and that probably nothing that was familiar to the eye of the great painter is now visible, excepting the stone cornice, which, running round the house, and continued all the length of the row of houses, shows that it was formerly one habitation, the upper story of which formed the roomy studio of Titian. Since his time, too, the prospect that once extended far over sea and land has been hopelessly blocked out by a pile of buildings, of which our artizan's dwelling is one, erected between the garden and the shore, if not covering great part of the garden itself, which must, from the descriptions, have been rather extensive, and once certainly reached to the water's edge. Zanetti's statement that the round-leafed tree in the Peter Martyr grew in a small court of this house is interesting, but of doubtful authority, since it is uncertain whether that famous picture was not painted some years before he occupied these premises. It is supported, however, by Ridolfi's assertion, that the mountains in that picture are those of Ceneda, which Titian saw from this spot.

The history of Titian's connection with the house appears to be this. Born in 1477, he arrived in Venice from his native mountains in his tenth year, conducted by an uncle, a resident in the city, and became the pupil successively of Zuccati and the two Bellini.

It is probable that for some years he lived with

this uncle, and it has been supposed that afterwards he took up his abode more or less in the Barbarigo palace. But no proof exists for either supposition; and it is not till the year 1531, when he was fifty-four, that his place of residence is clearly marked. A similar obscurity strangely enough attaches to the earlier portion of his art life, for not till he had attained the maturity of his powers does he seem to have attracted contemporary notice.

From the year 1531, however, and onward, all accounts speak of him as inhabiting the house which now bears his name; identifying it either by its situation, as opposite the island of Murano, and with a view over the lagune, or by its precise locality in the parish of San Canciano—that portion of it termed the 'Biri Grande.' Upon this latter point the most satisfactory testimony is that of the direction of a letter addressed to Titian by his son Orazio, then absent in Milan. These are among the facts brought to light by the industry of the Ab. Cadorin, which, with the documents he prints, establish the matter beyond dispute.

By these we learn that the house in question was erected in 1527 by Alviso Polani, upon some previously marshy ground opposite Murano; and that he called it 'Casa Grande,' as much it seems to distinguish it from other property of his in the neighbourhood, as on account of the large and commodious rooms it possessed on the upper floor. Polani died soon after, and

Titian first appears in 1531, hiring from the executors for an annual rent of forty ducats that upper floor, approached as it was by a separate entrance up the steps from the garden. This contract was renewed every year or two, while after some time, to prevent the ground-floor from being occupied by inconvenient, or it might almost seem disreputable tenants, he rented that also, letting it out to tenants of his own. The next date that occurs is 1549, when, evidently a man of wealth and hospitable ways, he added to his holding all the vacant land about, planting it with trees, and laying it out as an ornamental garden for the entertainment of his friends. Four years later the documents relating to this were confirmed, and in 1571 we find that Titian held a mortgage upon the whole estate, which, probably by foreclosure, ensured its continued possession, so that with his other property it passed upon his death in 1576 to his son Pomponio.

In that son's worthless hands it did not long remain. The paternal estates were speedily squandered, and in 1581 the Casa Grande was sold to Cristoforo Barbarigo, who was fortunate enough to meet immediately with a worthy tenant in the painter Francesco da Ponte, a son of the more celebrated Bassano, but well reputed in his day, and of whom it is pleasant to think as sustaining the artistic associations of the house. To him, along with others of greater name, were entrusted works still extant in the Ducal Palace, and amongst these it concerns us to note a 'Battle of Cadore,' evidently replacing, though

with less importance as to size and situation, the great picture by Titian then recently destroyed, and of which, when we reach Cadore, we shall have more to say.

This Francesco, who seems to have been of a pure and simple nature, came to an unfortunate end in the midst of his days. Oppressed with melancholy, and haunted with the idea that the 'sbirri' were in search of him, he was so terrified one day by a sudden knocking at the door, (our identical garden-door?) that he leaped from his window into the garden, and falling on his head died presently of the injury; thus darkening a pleasant spot with a sad memory. This occurred in 1594.

Still in the succession of art, the premises next became the residence of Leonardo Corona of Murano, a student of the works of Titian, who in his youth had made so excellent a copy of the 'Battle of Cadore' that at Verona, where it was sent, it was afterwards supposed to be an original. To him, however, as to his predecessor, the garden of Titian became a fatal spot, but in another manner. Reviving the festivities of which, with a much more famous circle of guests, it had so often been the scene, he died of a fever brought on by a debauch there in 1605, at the age of forty-four.

His was the last reputation connected with those walls and walks. A natural son of Barbarigo inherited the property. A Roman merchant acquired it in right of his wife. The noble family of the

Berlendis purchased it in 1674, and with them it remained 136 years. Then undistinguished names succeed; the last legal document connected with it quoted by Cadorin, (Titian's being the first,) is dated November 11, 1826.

Cadorin reports the remains of frescoes on the west front, but to which of the three painters who had lived in the house they were to be attributed it was impossible to say. They have since disappeared. Some sixty years ago also there existed round the cornice of the principal chamber a charming series of dancing cupids painted upon canvas. These, by the then tenant, were whitewashed over, but made aware that he had covered something of value, he tore down the canvas, steeped it in water to remove the wash, and sold it to some now unknown purchaser. This chamber, still of good dimensions and originally lofty, and spacious enough to receive the largest pictures, had been partitioned off for the convenience of ordinary tenants. Outside, as already mentioned, the erection from time to time of buildings between it and the sea destroyed the beautiful view of Murano, and the distant mountains; while on the southern side four small houses, built in 1675, contributed to deprive the premises of air and light.

Such have been the fortunes of the 'Casa Vecelliana.' Let us now return to the days of its glory, when it received under its roof some of the most renowned personages of history. Titian's wife Cecilia,

Lucia, or whoever she might be—wife at any rate, notwithstanding recent scepticism*—died, probably in child-birth, the year before his removal to the house in 1531. But he brought thither three children: Pomponio, six years old; Orazio younger, but the date of whose birth is not exactly known; and an infant daughter, Lavinia, who was born, it is supposed, shortly before the death of her mother. For many years Titian's excellent sister, Orsola, was at the head of his household. She had returned with him from her father's house in Cadore, whither he had gone with his children after the death of his wife, and she lived ever afterwards with him at Venice—'sister, daughter, mother, companion, and steward of his household' (so Aretino described her). She died in 1550, and thus saw all his children arrive at mature years.

Lavinia, beautiful as several portraits by her father's loving hand show her to have been, and of whom he was passionately fond, married at the age of twenty-four a gentleman of Serravalle, and had six children, but died like her mother at the birth of the last. This sorrowful event Titian is believed to have commemorated in a picture representing his daughter in the condition of approaching maternity, himself sitting at

* Upon this and other disputed points, I follow Cadorin as a patient and careful investigator; but the forthcoming volumes of Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle's, 'New Vasari,' may be expected to throw fresh and important light upon many obscurities in the life of Titian.

her side, and in the corner a skull. With her, and with his sister, must have departed much of the light and comfort of Titian's domestic life at the Casa Grande, except so far as the care of Orazio could supply their loss. This favourite son of the painter lived much with his father, travelled with him on his various journeys, became his man of business and factotum, looked after the country properties at Cadore and Conegliano, and took part in the timber trade between Cadore and Venice. Of a mechanical turn, he invented a new sort of flour-mill, with probably the usual fate of inventors. Some say he dabbled in alchemy, with what success we may still more safely say. Originally, he had studied his father's art, and he practised it indeed with some success all his life, though evidently much diverted from its pursuit by his various avocations. He married in 1547, but still lived chiefly with his father, and left no children. As for Pomponio, the eldest, though an ecclesiastic, for which profession he was destined from early years, he never performed clerical duties; nor, although once offered a bishopric, which his father knowing his graceless character would not allow him to accept, did he ever attain to higher preferment than that of a canonry at Milan. He had no fixed residence, and was most likely as much at home in the Casa Grande as anywhere; living the gay dissipated life of such a cleric then, and no doubt a sufficient cause of trouble to that industrious household.

For industrious it was. Titian himself was a miracle of diligence, and continued so to the extreme limit of his life; always with his brush, his chalk, or his charcoal in hand; recording some conception, or noting some aspect of nature, or elaborating some great work. Many of his most renowned pictures went from this house: such as the Ecce Homo at Vienna, the 'Paradise' and the 'Last Supper' at Madrid, and the Martyrdom of St. Lawrence; while for its biographical interest may be noted that picture of the Magdalen for Philip of Spain, studied from a neighbour's daughter, upon which he was once so much absorbed that the poor girl, exhausted by the long constraint, burst into tears; unluckily the incident was so appropriate to the subject that, far from shortening, it only prolonged the sitting, while the ruthless old painter, going himself without his dinner, transferred it to his canvas. It is amusing to see how characteristically in the letter accompanying the picture he made use of the circumstance. 'I add,' he says, 'my tears to hers, that my pension may be paid.'

But Titian was not the only worker. His brother Francesco, an artist almost equal to himself, had lived and painted with him much in his earlier years; and then, after soldiering for a while with distinction, had betaken himself to Cadore, and its everlasting timber trade. Yet winter found him generally in the Casa Grande, an addition, if only now as an amateur, to that company of artist relatives of which Titian's son

Orazio, a second cousin Marco, Girolamo Tiziano, perhaps a son (employed in drawing from models), and Cesare Vecellio, a distant kinsman, were the principal members. All these were more or less resident under his roof; but there were, besides, numerous scholars, who after the custom of the time studied under and assisted the great master, many of them great themselves in their day. Tintoretto, Bordone, Campagnola, the elder Bassano, Bonvicino, Bonifaccio, Moretto, the Palmas—or at least Palma the younger, and many others of less name, passed through his studio; but of these some, such as Campagnola and Tintoretto, were of an earlier date than that of his residence in the Casa Grande. It is pretty certain, however, that to this latter period belonged the influx of foreign students, of whom the three brothers Schwarz from Germany, and the Fleming Calcar, are specially mentioned. Those German landscape painters, of whom Vasari speaks as living in Titian's house, were not perhaps inmates of this particular residence. We may be more certain of the engravers that worked under his roof, and copied his works. This is settled by the dates. Cornelius Corte, a Flemish engraver on copper, joined him in 1570; but as early as 1549 Domenico delle Greche cut in wood under his inspection that 'Destruction of Pharaoh' of which he had furnished the design.

Thus the place was almost an art-factory, and in a sense not to be commended, if the anecdote be true

that Titian, on leaving his studio, was accustomed to place the key where it was accessible to his scholars, and winked at their making copies, which he afterwards retouched and sold as his own. We must be sorry to believe this of the grand old man; but along with a certain generosity in expenditure, there appears a strong disposition to make the most, in a pecuniary sense, of his great genius. His reputed jealousy of other artists seems disproved by well-attested instances of hearty commendation; but he might not be insensible to competition in a business point of view, and a strong business habit seems to have been a decided characteristic of his long life. Might not this 'mountain man' have been something of a 'canny Scot,' or a shrewd Swiss, in these matters?

But if we touch upon the blemishes of his character, we must needs, and especially in connection with his domestic life, take some notice of those fair 'mistresses of Titian,' whose portraits adorn so many galleries. These pictures indeed were all, as far as can be judged, of earlier date than that of his residence in the Casa Grande, and do not therefore impugn the reputation of that household; but apart from this, and while not claiming for the great painter a purity very unusual in a man of his time and habits, it may quite be doubted whether the lovely women, whose portraits are so significantly catalogued in the collections, stood in any such relation to him. It might rather seem that whenever a particularly charming female figure

could not be identified, she was immediately labelled a 'Bella di Tiziano.' Even the famous 'Violante,' introduced in a picture for the Duke of Ferrara, with a bunch of violets upon her bosom, and the artist's name written round her arm, and whom in writing to the Duke he described as 'the object dearest to him on earth,' is, with much show of reason, supposed to have been no mistress, but his honest wife, designated under a fanciful title according to the frequent practice of the poets. The portrait already alluded to of his daughter 'enceinte,' was carelessly determined to be that of a mistress till the word 'conjugii' was noticed in the inscription; and as to the exquisitely tender and pensive head at the Pitti Palace, it is difficult to believe but that the title it bears was the calumny of a dissolute time, and a convenient screen for ignorance; and again in the famous picture with the mirrors, at Paris, there is no evidence whatever that the figure holding up the glass to that superb beauty is really the painter, while so far as resemblance goes, the evidence is entirely adverse.

There are indeed certain pictures full of the luxury of art which might imply a sensual taste, but these, in the absence of direct evidence, cannot be held to outweigh the testimony to a pure life which the possession of unimpaired powers, and the practice of an incessant industry to the age of ninety-nine, afford.

Titian's intimacy with the profligate Aretino offers a more serious ground for suspicion. They were exceed-

ingly intimate. At the very choice supper parties in the gardens of the Casa Grande, Aretino was a constant guest, and, judging from the correspondence, as frequently entertained Titian in return; and sometimes one may think in rather equivocal company. Yet this very correspondence, consisting often of careless notes of the hour, brings to light the fact that Aretino in writing to his friend never used any gross allusion! A strange reticence on Aretino's part, and which, if it were due to his consciousness that his friend was nobler than himself, is none the less creditable to him. But indeed, whatever he might have been at one time, it should be remembered that in the latter years of Aretino's life, which were those of his intimacy with Titian, while his brilliant powers and taste in art no doubt remained intact, his character had so far changed that, abandoning the ribaldry which had made him famous, he wrote a paraphrase upon the Penitential Psalms, and other religious works, till his astonished admirers called him the fifth Evangelist. That his conversation at Titian's board was, at least on one occasion, not less innocent than his correspondence, we shall presently have an opportunity of showing.

At that board as constant a guest was the sculptor Sansovino, one of Titian's closest friends. He and Aretino were the 'habitués;' but, besides these, might frequently be seen there a bright circle composed of the rank and beauty, the literature and art, of that bright time in Italy. No stranger of distinction arrived in

Venice but visited the now forgotten home of her greatest painter. Here came (in 1574) Henry III. of France with a retinue of dukes, no doubt a rare and state occasion. Here those two cardinals, in whose honour Titian threw his purse to his steward with carte blanche for the entertainment. Here came, too, that 'magnificent, mad old Florentine,' Benvenuto Cellini, and the industrious Vasari, to pay their respects to one, of whom Michael Angelo had said at last, that 'he alone was worthy to be termed a painter.' Nor were there wanting names of worthier fame. Ariosto, Navagero, Bernardo Tasso, Bembo, and many others may be numbered among the friends of Titian, and the frequenters of the 'house by the sea.'

The suppers of which we have spoken belonged to the summer time, and were spread always in the garden. Many of the brief notes of Aretino contain witty allusions to the past, or the coming entertainment; but we are fortunate in possessing a detailed narrative by a chance visitor, which puts before us the actual scene and circumstance of such a banquet, and rescues one at least of those rich evenings in Titian's garden from the night of time. It is to a literary man from Rome, 'Il Priscianese,' that we owe this lively picture.

'I was invited on the 1st of August, to celebrate that sort of Bacchanalian feast which, I know not why, is called "Ferrare Agosto"—although indeed there were many disputing about it—in a delightful garden of Messer Tiziano Vecellio, a most excellent painter as every one

knows, and a person truly adapted to season with courtesies any distinguished entertainment. There were assembled with the said Messer Tiziano, as like desires like, some of the rarest geniuses which are found at present in this city, and of ours, principally M. Pietro Aretino, a new miracle of nature, and next to him Messer Jacopo Tatti, called Il Sansovino, almost as great an imitator of nature with the chisel as was the master of the feast with the pencil; also M. Jacopo Nardi and myself, so that I made the fourth amidst so much wisdom.

'Here, before they set out the tables, for although the place was shady the sun still made his strength much felt, the time was passed in contemplation of the life-like figures in the excellent paintings of which the house was full, and in discussing the real beauty and charm of the garden, which was a pleasure and a wonder to every one. It is situated in the extreme part of Venice upon the sea, and from it may be seen the pretty little island of Murano, and other beautiful places. This part of the sea, as soon as the sun went down, was filled with a thousand little gondolas adorned with beautiful women, and resounded with divers harmonies—the music of voices and instruments—which till midnight accompanied our delightful supper.

'But returning to the garden. It was so well kept, so beautiful, and consequently so much praised, that the resemblance which it offered to the pleasant gardens of S. Agata brought them so to my memory,

and raised such a desire for them, and for you dear friends, that I could not well make out, for the greater part of the evening, whether I were at Rome or at Venice. In the meanwhile came the hour for supper, which was no less beautiful and well arranged, than plentifully provided. Besides the most delicate viands and precious wines, there were all those pleasures and amusements that were appropriate to the season, the guests, and the feast. Having just arrived at the fruit, your letter came, and because in praising the Latin language the Tuscan was blamed, Aretino became exceedingly angry; and if he had not been withheld, I believe would have put his hand to one of the most cruel invectives in the world, calling furiously for paper and ink, though he did not fail to say a good part of it in words. Finally the supper ended most pleasantly.'

Yes, that supper ended, and at last all the suppers! We do not know to how late a period of Titian's life such gaieties continued; this only is certain, that Aretino, a guest of thirty years standing, failed from them in 1557; and that Sansovino died thirteen years after; while Titian at ninety-three was still a hale old man, daily at his work. But his subjects were now mostly devotional. At ninety-two he had executed the three fine pictures for Brescia, afterwards destroyed by fire; and during his last years was engaged upon an Entombment and a Pietà, as suitable occupation for one whose end could not be far distant.

At this time, then, we may believe that his garden afforded him pleasure of a serener sort than in the gay days of his jovial friends; and that he may have been attracted there less by the gliding gondolas, the fair women, and the strains of music, than by the sunset tints upon the far-off mountain range stretching along the horizon. They might well be dear to his old eyes, for they were his native mountains, whither he still betook himself for study and delight, undertaking the rough journey even when ninety years of age. They might well be dear; for one transcendent peak amongst them, as seen from his garden, was none other than the Antelao, the loftiest of his native Alps, and the chief guardian of his birthplace Cadore.

It may have been partly the convenience to an artist of the northern aspect, partly the open situation, that led him first to the Casa Grande, but we may be allowed to reckon that distant prospect as one of the inducements. It is true, as Mr. Ruskin remarks, that the glory of the Alps as an illuminated snow line has never been illustrated by him; but that is not the permanent characteristic of these Venetian mountains; and that their shapes were not lost upon him, we know, for there exists a record of the Antelao, as seen from his garden, which he introduced in a composition where, but for love's sake, it was not wanted. Sheep with a shepherd playing on a pipe do not fit well to the sea-side and buildings; but Titian, looking out of his window, saw the sea, and Murano with its

houses, and lifted up above them his native mountain, and he marked it down to fill a corner of his picture. There it might have remained unrecognised, had not Mr. Ruskin, in these latter days, copied that portion of the old print, and given his own careful drawing of the mountain, to illustrate a subtle argument, though still unaware, apparently, of the special interest it had in Titian's eyes, since he only speaks of it as 'one of the greater Tyrolese Alps,' a somewhat erroneous description.*

And that Titian dwelt upon that view, we have also other evidence. The Antelao is seen through an opening in the nearer hills rising immediately from the plain. Those are the hills of Ceneda, which, according to Ridolfi, are introduced in the background of the Peter Martyr. They would be visible many a time, when the higher mountains were obscured. It is possible, indeed, that Titian sketched them not from his Venice garden, but from a country-house of his in their own immediate neighbourhood, of which we shall presently speak; yet they must any way have been a point of interest in his prospect.

Of course the blocks of building now shut out that prospect from Titian's house; nor, truth to say, will the Antelao and his compeers be readily seen from any part of Venice. Either the thick haze of the great Venetian plain obscures them utterly, or the clouds of the Adriatic driven up against them, roll and

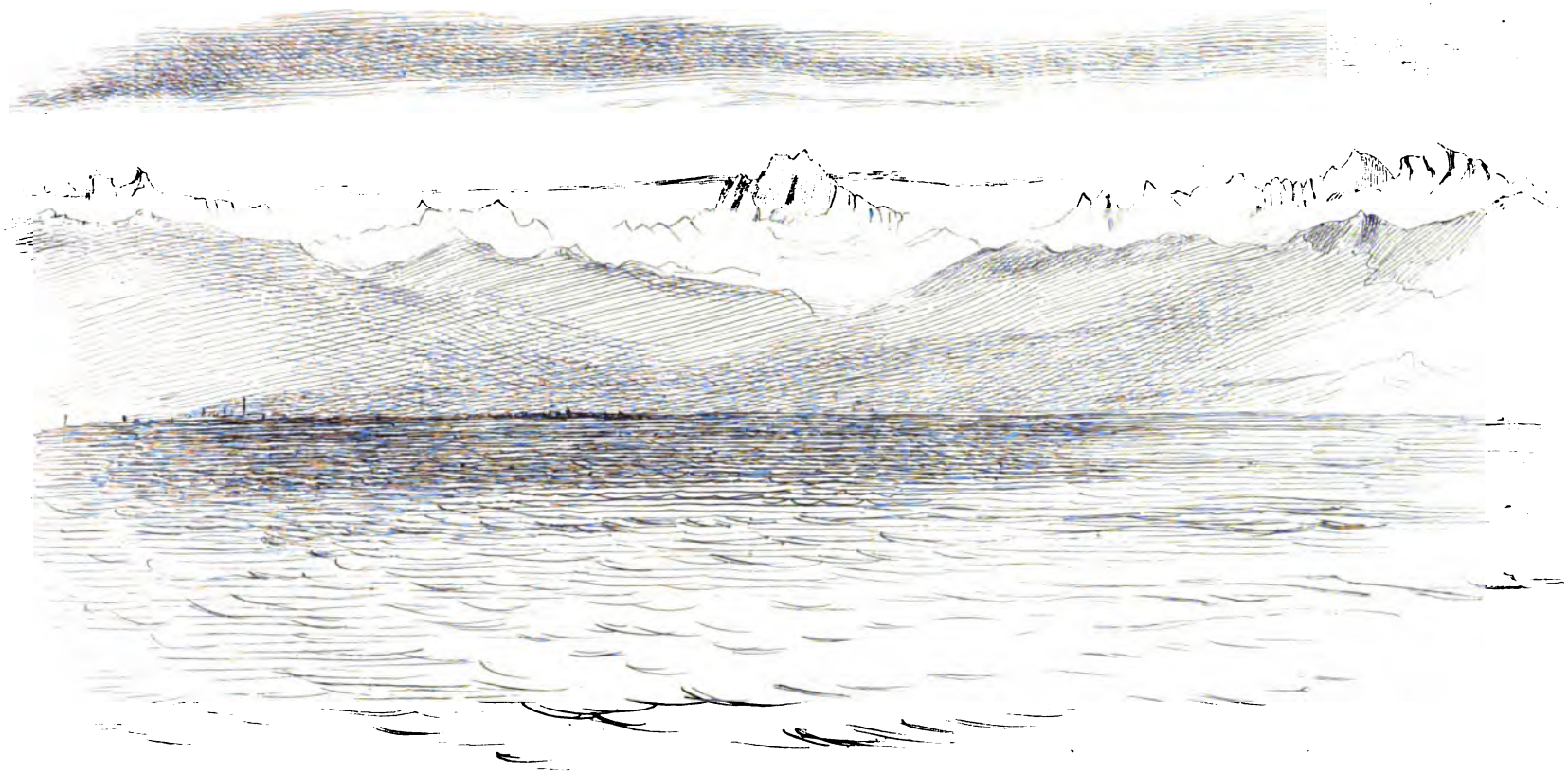
* Vol. IV. p. 224, 'Modern Painters.'

cling about their summits, and are almost equally baffling to the observer, if he is not content with vaguely realising the

> Alpine height
> Of blue Friuli's mountains

of Byron's fine description. The poet's further reference, it may be remarked, to 'the peak of the far Rhætian hill,' very probably refers to the Antelao as seen from his point of view near the mouth of the Brenta; though it is not properly Rhætian, for there is nothing belonging to that range within sight. In Mr. Cook's numerous and faithful pictures of the Venetian lagune, there is but one instance, so far as I am aware, of the introduction of the Venetian Alps; and then they are shown in their winter aspect, a line of sparkling snow crests. This omission, I believe, he explains on the ground that they are not visible above twenty days in the year. In a delicately touched pencil outline by Mr. Ruskin, a portion of which, by his kind permission, is very inadequately rendered on the opposite page, the entire base of the range is swathed in mist. The watchman on the Campanile of St. Mark will tell you that the most favourable time is the very earliest dawn; and residents in Venice, that winter is the only season when they are seen for any length of time together.

I myself can testify to almost a dozen ineffectual ascents of the Campanile, and to only two brief visions



The Antelao seen from Venice
from a drawing by Mr. Ruskin

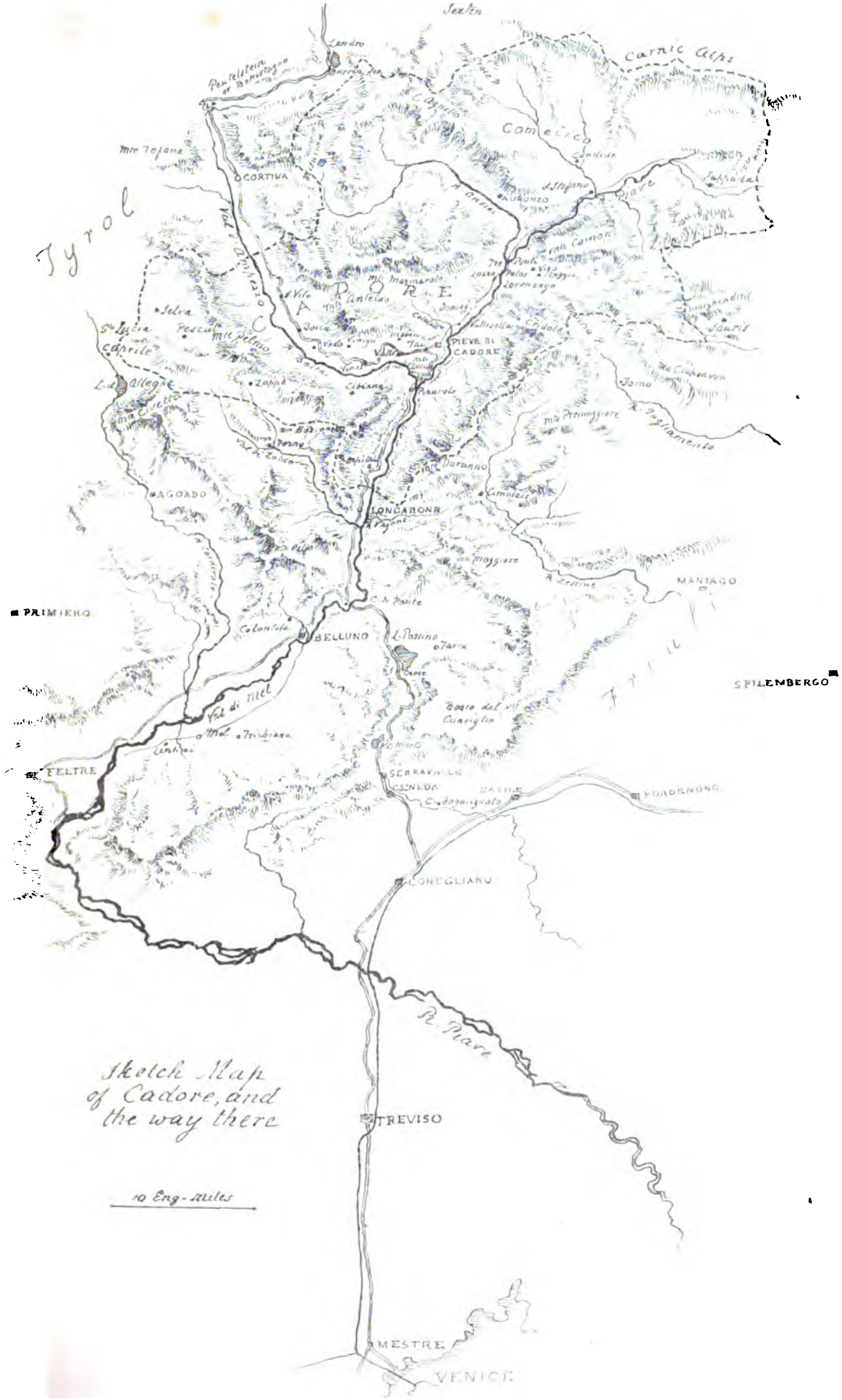
from other spots of their far-off beauty: once from near Titian's house itself, when the Antelao, though cloud tormented, showed its unmistakable form for a moment above the gap in the Ceneda hills, which certifies its identity: once from the long railway bridge, where the pale shape stood fully revealed, yet so pale as to be scarcely relieved among the soft hues of the sky. That paleness is due to the fact, not noticed till of late, that all those higher peaks are 'dolomite;' upon the relation of which strange formation to the landscape of Titian, and others of the Venetian school, we shall have more to say when we get amongst them.

Titian had directed in his will that he should be buried in the chapel of his family in Cadore, but he died at a time of terror and distress, when his wish could not be carried out. In 1576 the plague steadily advancing from Trent, where it had first broken out, entered Venice, and quickly swept away a third of the population. Titian, old as he was, would have retired, as he had done before on a similar occasion, to Cadore, but delayed till communication was cut off. Whether then he actually perished of the disease, or only of the exhaustion of age, is uncertain. Orazio however, we are told, died of the plague at the lazaretto. Pomponio apparently was at Milan. His faithful sister, his beloved daughter, his brother, and all his choice friends, were dead; and Titian himself, at ninety-nine, lay dying alone, abandoned even by his servants. In the midst of this misery, it is said, a

band of ruffians, ranging free from molestation in the horror of the time, broke into the Casa Grande, remote as it was on the outskirts of the city, and carried off plate, jewellery, pictures, and sketches before the old man's eyes. We know no more: only that, by special permission of the authorities, his remains were interred in the church of the Frari without any funeral pomp, save that the insignia of a knight, the dignity bestowed by Charles V., were laid with him in his grave.

No stone marked the spot till forty-five years afterwards, when Palma the younger placed an inscription to commemorate 'the common glory' of Titian and of the elder Palma. It was reserved for the munificence of two Emperors of Austria, aided by the genius of Canova, to erect a more worthy monument.

We have already brought down the fortunes of the Casa Grande to modern days; so now let us go to Cadore.


Sexten
Carnic Alps
Comelico
Tyrol
CORTINA
AURONZO
BORE
PIEVE DI CADORE
Selva
Pescul
Zoppe
AGORDO
LONGARONE
PRIMIERO
BELLUNO
MANTAGO
SPILEMBERGO
FELTRE
SERAVALLE
CENEDA
PORDENONE
CONEGLIANO
R. Piave
TREVISO
MESTRE
VENICE
Sketch Map of Cadore, and the way there
10 Eng. miles

CHAPTER II.

TITIAN'S ROAD TO THE MOUNTAINS.

Cadore, and how to reach it—Titian's yearly progress—Treviso and its picture—The hills of Ceneda and Titian's villa—Roganzuolo—Titian as a landscape painter—What he took from Ceneda—Previtali's altar-piece—Serravalle—Forest of the Gran Consiglio—Titian's woodland.

TITIAN was formerly known in art as 'Tiziano da Cadore;' and it seems, as if by chance only, his name was not lost in that of his birthplace, as has happened with so many other great artists.

The place itself has attracted little notice. Northcote, following Vasari, absurdly describes it as 'a small town five miles from the Alps.' What was meant by 'the Alps,' or 'the miles,' it is impossible to guess, since Cadore (eighty-six miles from Venice) lies deep in the midst of an Alpine mountain land. The district is full of beauty and grandeur; but of the numerous tourists who worship Titian in the fair city of the sea, few know anything of Titian's country.

Yet it is easy of access. The Ampezzo road, connecting Venetia with Tyrol, passes directly through it; but of all the routes to Venice this has been the least frequented. Before the opening of the Brenner Railway,

not many Venice tourists either went, or returned, by Tyrol; fewer still were attracted by the Ampezzo, which required a detour through country of far less historical interest than the great valley of the Adige, and that, when the latter possessed a railway, was at still greater disadvantage than before. Two or three posting or vetturino carriages in a season, going south, might turn off at Franzensfeste, or at Brixen, after crossing the Brenner, to find their way, under objections from the courier or murmurs from the vetturino, by the wild Ampezzo; and as many, or perhaps not so many, might pass from the Italian side by Bassano and Belluno, or leave the Venice and Trieste railway at Conegliano, whence it is nearly fifty miles all through mountains, to Cadore. But the little town itself is not exactly on the road. It lies about half a mile away from it, and that half mile proves in most cases a final impediment to a visit to Titian's birthplace. The most likely people to stumble upon the spot are the pedestrians, who now, beginning to explore the dolomite country, are pretty sure, sooner or later, to find themselves in the neighbourhood, and to whom a half mile, or a ten miles, makes no difference.

We will follow Titian in his summer progress thither, for if Francesco spent his winters with him in Venice, Titian was pretty sure to return the visit in the heats of summer.

The railway now hurries the traveller over ground that Titian and his cavalcade, for he journeyed in some state, would traverse leisurely. Treviso, some eighteen

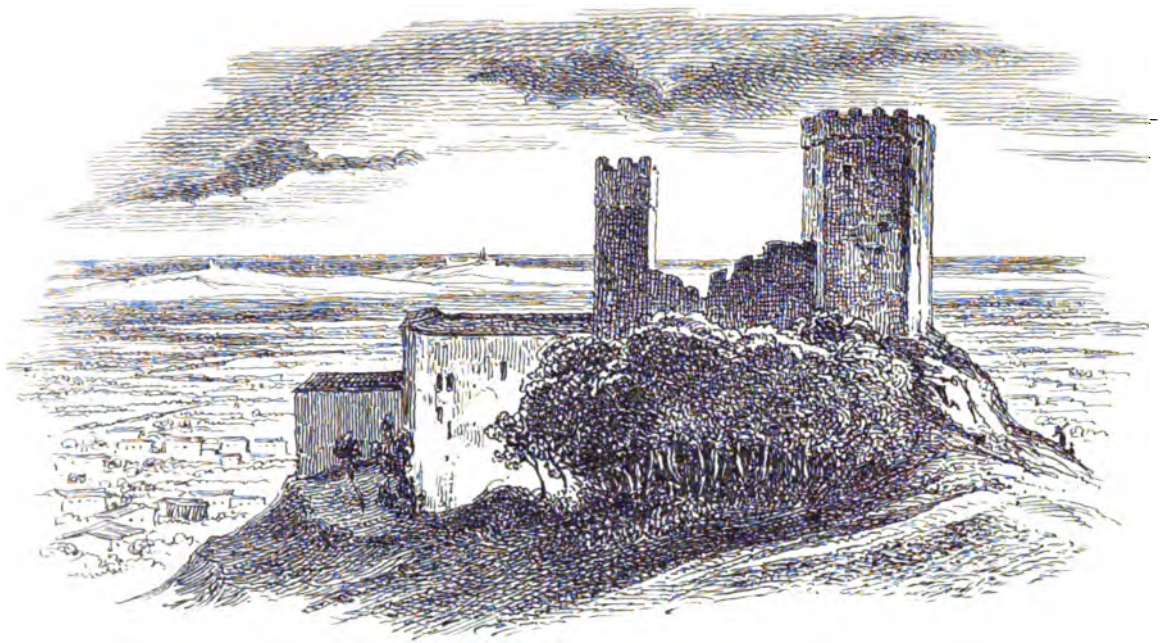
miles, might be his first resting-place. Here his early rival, Giorgione, had left one of his greatest works; here his later competitor, Pordenone, was even then, perhaps, painting certain fine frescoes; and here he would find a just satisfaction in contemplating one of his own choicest works in the 'Annunciation' placed over a side altar in the Duomo. Judging from the style, it was painted when he was still under the influence of the firm and finished manner of Bellini, but not before he had acquired the subdued sun-glow of his prime. The virgin figure is perfect in its charm, so far as womanly loveliness is concerned; and the evening sky and landscape are in harmony with the solemn beauty of the subject. The angel—the only imperfection—falls, alas! far below it; for in truth the celestial visitant is but an awkward-limbed lad with wings, posting in with a hasty message, irresistibly suggesting to the modern mind a telegraph boy in a hurry. Let that pass as an instance of the weakness of Titian in close contrast with his strength.

Further on is crossed the broad bed of the Piave, Titian's familiar native stream, which has made a long circuit through the mountains, and will be struck again higher up, before it is tracked home to Cadore.

Conegliano, about thirty-six miles from Venice, is the next place of importance; and here, in present days, the traveller, who has availed himself of the railway, must leave it for the road. But instead of taking the diligence, which travels at inconvenient

hours, and does not go direct to Cadore, he had better either post, or, if alone, hire a one-horse car for the different stages; and the more so that Ceneda, the first post station, is well worth some delay. In the streets of Conegliano, the old painter might recognise more fresco work of Pordenone. The colours still faintly flush the walls of some old house-fronts, although regenerated Italy arises too often to white-wash. Conegliano is collected round a hill in the vast plain—rich but tedious, one endless entanglement of vines, and mulberries, and Indian corn—one endless labyrinth of ditches, through which the road, dusty and straight, leads on from Conegliano to Ceneda.

But at Ceneda it is infinitely refreshing to find the gracious hills, that have long been pencilled on the horizon, actually swelling under your feet. They rise in an abrupt grass-covered ridge immediately behind the town; one sharp point crowned by a pilgrimage chapel, commanding a magnificent view. On a lower point, nearer the town, and overlooking it with its brown towers, stands the castle of the Bishop of Ceneda, which might have been the princely residence of Titian's son Pomponio, if the Pope's offer of the bishopric had been accepted. Yet Titian may have been often a guest within its walls, for not only was his married daughter Lavinia living close by at Serravalle, almost under its shadow, but among these Ceneda hills he possessed some country properties, and one favourite villa. This stood somewhere on a



Castle of Ceneda
Hill of Manza in the distance

long, low stretch of hill called Manza, almost the last of the subsiding Alpine waves towards the plain, about four miles from Ceneda, and a marked feature in the view southwards from the castle hill. Its situation is pointed out by the fact that the inhabitants of Castel Roganzuolo, a small village on the hill, unable to pay in cash for a picture painted for their church by Titian, in 1544, undertook, besides supplying annually for eight years a certain amount of corn and wine at a fixed price, to transport the stone required for the erection of his villa, and to find the manual labour. The house itself is supposed to be that at present occupied by a family of the name of Fabbris. When Pomponio disposed of all his father's possessions, he reserved this for a while; but it eventually came into the hands of his brother-in-law, Sarcinello, of Serravalle.

An excursion to Roganzuolo one afternoon from Ceneda brought me, after a mile or two of the high road, and as much of a winding lane through hedges of acacia, to a poor and scattered village at the foot of a bare knoll. To one edge of this clung a forlorn looking little church, and a few yards off, upon an outcropping rock, stood its attendant tower. But what a view! An expiring thunderstorm was moaning along the terraces of Alpine hills, rising into mist and blackness on the north; but, under a ragged canopy of cloud, the distant Julian Alps stood out in opal clearness, and a flood of golden light was poured over the plain,

which spread boundless beneath the eye—east and west, and south, a sea of verdure, whose purple distance might have been the sea itself, as the shining campaniles, dotting it all over, might have been the sails of innumerable ships. One of the most distant, due south, was pointed out as that of St. Mark's. Thus arrayed in glory, and with all the advantage of vivid contrast, the prospect was one of the most captivating that can be imagined. Yet it must be striking at any time; and Cadorin, who, if he saw it under any such combination of splendour and gloom, must have been fortunate indeed, speaks of it as showing at one view 'mountains, hills and rivers, valleys and plains, cities and villages.' Ciani too, the historian of Cadore, seems to have been equally impressed. After dwelling upon the separate features of the vast panorama, he thus closes his description: 'But the most charming spectacle of all is Ceneda itself, visible from this eminence in a clear summer morning, irradiated by the sun, which, dispelling the lightly veiling vapours, displays the city like a beautiful woman, rising to the labours of the day.' Fortunate Titian, to possess a resort like this, which no Venice garden could rival in attraction, and that associated in one view almost all the elements of the highest landscape beauty.

Nor is the scene less interesting for its wealth of historical suggestion; for here, beneath your feet, the fortunes of the world have ebbed and flowed for ages.

Now it was Roman armies passing to Eastern conquests; now barbarian hordes pressing westward into Italy; now German, now French, invaders contending for the mastery. What a roll call there might be of great captains that have passed this way: Cæsar, Attila, Napoleon, with all before, between, and since! Nay, some of them perhaps may have spurred up this very hill to watch the advancing cloud of war below. Pray Heaven that the last interloper upon Italian soil marched with the last Austrian soldier that turned his back on Venice!

Inside the little church (the key of which must be obtained from the Canonica a short distance off), a single glance at the altar-piece showed that if Titian's hand had been there, much of his work had been coarsely painted over, and much had perished. It represents a standing figure of the Madonna, supporting the child upon a pedestal, with something of sweeping majesty in attitude and drapery, something of graceful touch in the child-like form, and the mother's features, suggesting a master's thought, but nothing else of Titian; and two detached figures of Apostles have been still worse treated. Damaged but rather vigorous frescoes cover the chancel walls, which must have been very gay in their time; now there is little else than a confusion of lances and pennons, and prancing steeds, which may have either a saintly or a secular reference. One portion of them, however, is plainly concerned with the history of St.

Peter. The place might have been once the chapel of the 'Castel,' a stronghold that has long disappeared. A large house below was pointed out as the Palazzo Fabbris, but its identity with Titian's villa must be doubtful.

This hill of Manza introduces us to Titian as a Landscape Painter. Landscapes strictly so called from his hand are indeed, except in pen and ink drawings, extremely rare; but landscape backgrounds to his pictures are, as all his admirers know, more frequent than any other; and they reveal not only the close observer, but the first great sympathiser with the poetic side of natural scenery,—the first, or nearly the first, who breathed a soul into landscape art. Before him, and by his early contemporaries, we find scenery treated chiefly in its forms alone, and lifeless under the broad glare of day. Aerial perspective, following the linear, came but slowly, and aerial 'accidents' slower still. A finer appreciation began to show itself in the early morning sweetness of which we have instances in Perugino and Raphael, and which sheds a special charm over the landscapes of such masters as G. Bellini, Previtali, Basaiti, and Cima da Conegliano; all, be it observed, Venetians. The last-named painter deserves particular mention, since he was native to these very hills of Ceneda that now surround us, and which may be recognised in most of his works; as, for instance, in a charming picture in the Louvre, where they fill a background in sweet array, all dressed in lovely

blue; while again, in one of his works in the National Gallery, a town, which is probably Conegliano, stands in all the clear radiance of morning light. It was the dawn of poetic feeling. Giorgione, the greatest of the Bellini school excepting Titian, carried it further still. In him we find the rich gloom of evening; yet it was the glowing colour, rather than the pathetic suggestion, that took his fancy. It was reserved for Titian himself to bring out all the tenderness that Bellini only occasionally exhibited and Giorgione's more sensuous nature missed. It was for him to apprehend the subduing pathos that comes with eventide —when the sky is all a-glow with dying tints, and everything earthly is transfigured, and the heart is strangely stirred with vague yearnings, retrospections, aspirations, and a consciousness that human life and destiny are mysteriously reflected in the face of nature.

And yet he has been represented as delighting especially in 'the vigour and joy of existence,' a criticism I must venture to dispute. The portraits of him show always a grave, intent, almost a sad expression. The gravity of his treatment, whatever might be the subject, is known to all who know his works. There was gravity even in his gorgeous colouring which an admirable critic (Palgrave) describes as 'daylight mighty, yet subdued.' So much subdued, I would add, that he seems to have dipped his brush not so much in the colours of noon, as in the deeper tints of the gloaming; and to have wrought less with mighty

daylight than with mighty shadow. This at least is very obvious in his landscape, where it is the pensiveness of nature that he characteristically seizes—that mood of hers when she drops the veil of twilight over a scene, or whelms a wide prospect in deep purple shades, or builds up her ominous cloud masses on the far horizon. If Titian deserves the title of the 'Homer of Landscape,' it is because he was its first Art Poet.

But if he stands in this respect the first of the moderns, how differently has the greatest of the moderns expressed the same mystery and pathos of nature? Except in those earlier works in which he evidently imitated Titian, it was not so much by shadow, as by a tremulous veil of light, by transparent mists and vapours, that Turner gained his end; and his use of these was as new a revelation in art as Titian's grandeur of tone and shadow. But while the one was always on the verge of unsubstantial dreamland, the other was always solid and true—solid as are all the tints and shades when the sun begins to glow from the west. Titian's obscurity is never hazy, his mystery never due to vagueness. The difference, however, between the sky of England and that of this Cisalpine country explains much of the difference of treatment. Among these Venetian Alps, more frequently than with us, when clouds and mountains mingle they retain their separate embodiment. The clouds roll down in force, the mountains resist with might, and the landscape becomes dark and bright

in powerful contrast. A consideration which, along with the technical matter of the superior permanence of ultramarine, might perhaps have qualified Mr. Ruskin's remark upon the 'intense blues' of Titian's mountains.

But returning to Manza: it is from this neighbourhood, I apprehend, that most of those effects were studied, which belong to hills on a distant horizon. Once within the gorge at Serravalle, and these are no longer to be obtained; and so far I may be permitted again to question the correctness of Mr. Ruskin's statement, that Titian for nature 'always betook himself to the glens and forests of Cadore.' Of a distant rolling horizon Titian was very fond. A favourite effect with him was that of low, heaving hills, darkly blue, or purple, under a roof of cloud, but relieved against a yellow twilight that the cloudy mass just lifts to display; and many an evening hour might show such a scene from Manza. Of the absolute level, sea-like plain, which is so striking a feature there, a reminiscence remains, perhaps, in the picture of Our Saviour and the Magdalen in the National Gallery, where the hints of objects on the flat horizon line suggest the campaniles and specks of buildings which fringe that vast expanse.

To this Ceneda scenery also I would assign those charming mixtures of woodland and plain,—those sweeping intermingling lines of hill, here broken by a jutting rock, sinking there into the sudden depth of

bosky shades,—which are another characteristic of Titian's landscape. The play of light and shade over such a country, throwing out now this, now that, of the billowy ranges as they alternately smiled in sunshine, or frowned in shadow; now printing off a tower or a crag, dark against a far-off flitting gleam, now touching into brightness a cottage or a castle; he specially delighted to record. And again, the exquisite gradations of tint upon a hill-side, where shadow softens into light, and the delicate indications of a furrowed surface are disclosed, are always truly rendered. The Madonna and St. Catherine in the National Gallery offers a fine instance of his gloom among the hills (though the actual scene occurs some distance further on in our journey), while the gleam that strikes them from the breaking clouds is superbly Titianesque. In the Duke of Devonshire's grand picture, called St. John in the Wilderness, one of the few proper landscapes of Titian, all his skill in light and shade over an expanse of country is admirably shown, and used to bring out the poetry of the white mountain crags in the distance. It is possible that these may represent the picturesque range in the Val di Mel, presently to be noticed, and that the steepled town in front of them is Belluno; but the Ceneda country is, on the whole, the more likely scene.

More than all, however, we may trace to Manza those wonderful effects of sky that distinguish Titian from any other painter before or since, and which

Fig. 1. From the Madonna and St Catherine in the Nat: Gallery.

Fig. 2. From the Landscape in the Royal Collection

demand all the space between the distant horizon and the zenith for their elaboration. Here the complexity, and yet grandeur, of his treatment, show minute observation, subordinated to the noblest poetic conception. The solemn bands of stratus; the obtruding, ashy-pale masses of cumulus freaked with dashes of light, like the sheen of sable armour; and the interweaved spaces of deepest azure, combine to fill the heavens with one vast symphony of colour. One of the best illustrations of this, as of the several effects, derived, I have ventured to suppose, from Manza, is to be found in the upright picture in the Royal collection at Buckingham Palace, probably the finest pure landscape-Titian extant. However seriously damaged in the browns of the middle distance and foreground, however cruelly restored and heavily varnished, the most striking portion of the picture retains its integrity; and nothing, I think, in all landscape art exceeds the skill with which the attention is concentrated upon one far mountain peak, densely dark against the orange light of evening, while the rest of the range is blotted out by rain, and all the poetry of cloudland is exhausted upon the sky above. The picture offers too a fine point of comparison with the Madonna and St. Catherine in the National Gallery. There light breaks from the clouds; here, rain; and there is mastery over both.*

* Figs. 1, 2 roughly represent the contrasted effects in the two pictures.

Storms as constantly sweep through his pictures as over the hills, or along the vast horizon of Manza. On each of my visits to the spot, some portion of the great panorama was darkened by them. Even his pen and ink drawings are seldom without a lurid suggestion of tempest. But a still more prevalent feature is smoke,—the smoke, as from some flaring conflagration rising to the sky. This may be a reminiscence of fires among his native villages that had powerfully impressed his imagination;—we shall presently find that, during his lifetime, they were especially frequent, while, at the present moment, three of them lie waste, or are rebuilding, from the same cause. Or it may have been the furnace smoke of Murano, always in sight from his window, that struck his fancy, with its picturesque involutions and fantastic driftings; while it is certain that the wide prospect from Manza, with its myriad villages and farms, would often yield to his observing eye the same effective incidents. Anyway, we are reminded of Turner's fondness for, not volumes, but columns of smoke wavering into the sky from his lovely distances. The ancient painter took the more romantic; the modern, the more domestic and graceful view of it; but both recognised its artistic as well as its poetic value; artistic, from its help to composition, and the shadow, or the light, it flings into the scene; poetic, from its tragic, or its peaceful suggestion, the terror of conflagration, or the calm of the evening hearth.

For all such incidents as we have named, nature

somewhere must have been closely watched. With respect to the Peter Martyr we are expressly told, the landscape was that of Ceneda; but such traditions are rare, and he was too bold and free in his general treatment to be often detected in this way. Yet in the delicious little bits that fill up the corners in his pictures, or that are seen through some architectural opening, and in the accidents of effect just described (as in a more important particular presently to be mentioned), we find frequent proof of a direct study from nature. But it is remarkable that the landscape drawings of Titian, numerous as they are in the Uffizi, in the Louvre, and amongst the treasures, now dispersed, of the Wellesley collection, show very little chiaroscuro. They are, for the most part, rapid pen and ink sketches, some of them rather scratchy, and we might almost say feeble in handling, while others are firm, broad, decisive; generally sadly careless as to perpendiculars and the like, and unsatisfactory in foreground, but always true in mountain, tree, and cloud. His notes of colour, therefore, and of shadow, especial charms of his painted landscape, must have been carried in memory.

But we are still only at the threshold of Titian's country; let us follow him to the mountain region that he loved. For this we must return to the high road at Ceneda, where I must yet detain the reader awhile, since, as Ridolfi tells us, Titian on his progress to Cadore used always to turn aside here, ex-

pressly to admire a picture of the Annunciation by Previtali, a schoolfellow of his in the old Bellini days, but who died early, and while the greater artist was yet making his fame.

That which Titian thought worth while to see at every opportunity, no lover of art should miss. The picture will be found in the small church of the 'Nunziata,' standing in a quiet corner of the suburbs of Ceneda, about half a mile to the right of the road as you enter the town. As is usual with Previtali, it is signed 'Andrea Bergomensis Joannis Bellini Discipulus;' by reason of which modesty, though the tradition of Titian's visits is preserved, the work is only spoken of as by an unknown hand of the school of Bellini.

It possesses a singular beauty, which may be best appreciated by comparison with the treatment of the same subject by some other of the great names of his time. Tintoretto, for instance, in the Scuola di San Rocco, with characteristic energy depicts a mighty angel descending, as with a mighty rushing wind, into the open gallery of a rustic habitation, where darkness contends with the bursting light. Pordenone, in a picture close by at Serravalle, adopts the same idea of a flying angel and an open portico; but the descending flight is stately, and the daylight rich and sunny. Titian, as has been already noticed, in his picture at Treviso puts his lad of an angel upon his feet, in the undignified act of running; but the place is a

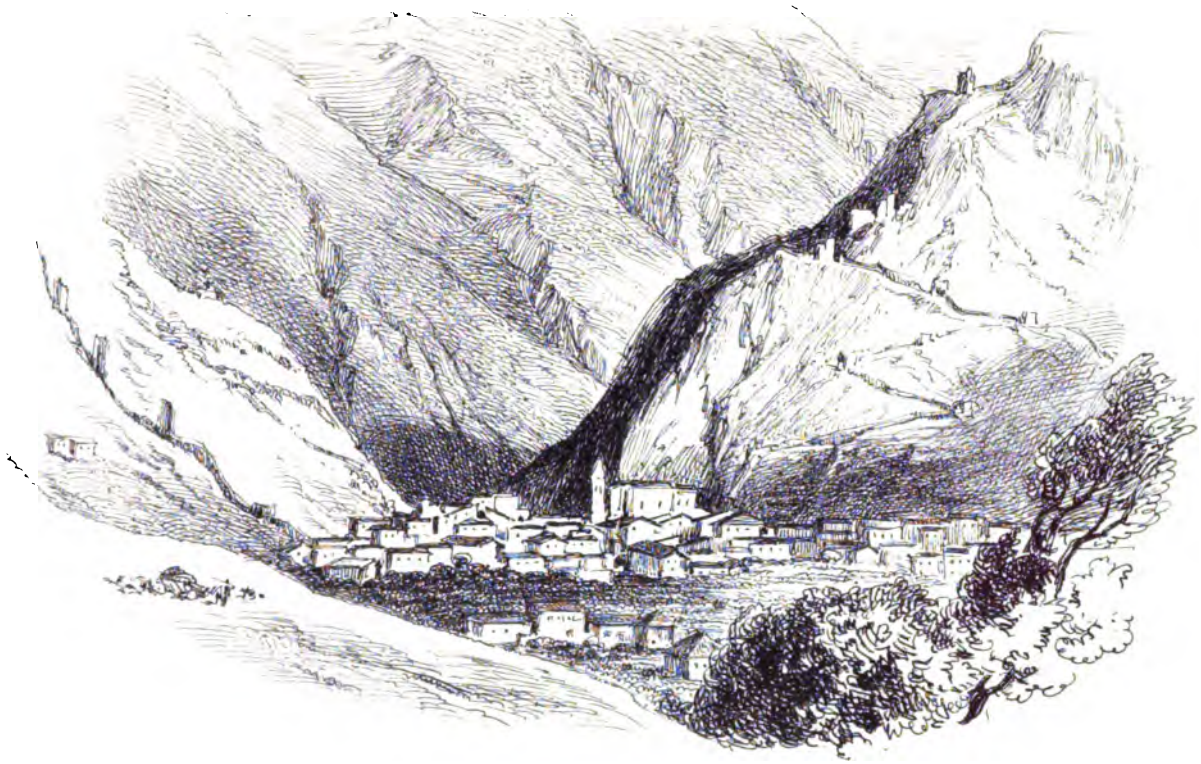
palace, and the scene is wrapped in evening shades. Previtali offers a different conception. The Virgin alone in a chamber, whose open window displays a sweet and simple morning landscape with a town or castle, which may mean Nazareth, crowning a gentle hill, sees suddenly before her, without hint or sound, a noble womanly form, with large folded wings, kneeling on one knee—a veritable apparition out of empty space. The drawing throughout, and especially of the angel, is true and careful, the colouring delicate, and the air of calmness and peace breathing through the whole composition is in perfect keeping with the beauty of the sacred story. How Titian, admiring the one, should paint the other, which, despite its exquisite art, is of the earth earthy, is a mystery.

Scarcely more than a mile from Ceneda the true gate of the hills is entered at Serravalle; where surely, though we are not told so, the house of his favourite daughter would be even more attractive than Previtali's picture. The ancient town once guarded the pass with walls and towers, enough of which remain to explain the grim intention, and to suggest that in some of the fortified places that fringe the hills in his landscapes, Titian had Serravalle in his eye. I well remember the lively interest with which, years ago, when first travelling this way, I surveyed these remnants of a medieval stronghold, lifting themselves above the mulberries and vines, and picturesquely topping each other as they climbed the hills; turreting, crag after crag, with jealous

care, and dropping lines of wall, now all broken, into the hollows. What history they had was then all dark to me; nor should I have been much enlightened, had I been told that it was the Caminesi—Lords of Cadore as of much else in this region—that here of old time built themselves up to the clouds and kept their state, watching at once the outlet from the mountains behind, and the far reaching plain in front. A more recent visit left me in doubt whether the old ruins in the interval had not been considerably carted away.

As a specimen of this kind of thing, however, Serravalle is inferior to Marostica, beyond Bassano to the west, and which being on no high-road is rarely seen. There, lately, walls and towers rising steeply on the hill side were tolerably perfect. They may easily have found their way into Titian's sketch-book, and they almost certainly appear in Basaiti's picture of St. Jerome, No. 281, in the National Gallery.

Upon at least one occasion Titian visited Serravalle when not on his way to Cadore. He went to take instructions for a large picture of the Virgin with St. Andrew and St. Vincent. This was in November of 1542, and it was not finished till five years afterwards, when he wrote requesting that it should be sent for, and on the ground of having substituted St. Peter for St. Vincent, demanded an addition of twenty-five ducats to the payment. The Serravallians failing to appreciate so highly the Prince of the Apostles, de-



Terravatic

clined the extra charge, and moreover insisted that the picture should be forwarded at the painter's own expense. Much litigation ensued, and six more years elapsed before a compromise was effected. The incident amusingly illustrates the very business-like character of Titian, while it is by no means a solitary instance of contemporary haggling over a work that posterity deems priceless.

It is one of his grand works, though strangely overlooked by tourists. On my visit to the church, which is known, though not properly a cathedral, as the Duomo of Serravalle, my time was limited by the approaching celebration of mass, and without more leisurely examination I can only record the impression at the moment, that it is not only a grand, but one of the grandest specimens of the master, and in very fair preservation. The situation too is good, in a well-lighted apse, and with the view unimpeded by intrusive altar ornaments. It represents the Virgin and Child in glory surrounded by angels, who fade into the golden haze above. Heavy-volumed clouds support and separate from earth this celestial vision; and below, standing on each side, are the colossal and majestic figures of St. Andrew and St. Peter; the former supporting a massive cross, the latter holding aloft, as if challenging denial of his faithfulness, the awful keys. Between these two noble figures, under a low horizon line, is a dark lake amidst darker hills, where a distant sail recalls the fisherman and his craft. Composition,

drawing, colour are all dignified, and worthy of the master's hand.*

The greater part of Serravalle is squeezed within the entrance of the gorge, which offers but a chill exchange for all the loveliness that decks 'the foot-stool of the Alps' surrounding Ceneda. It cheers the eye no more. In the ascending valley the scenery becomes severe. Southern vegetation creeps indeed a little way bordering the road, but then comes the gloomy Lago Morto, wherein, if you are to believe the 'lips of Eld,' any swimmer will be dragged mysteriously to the bottom, and any boat will be sure to sink. I do not know the origin of the belief, the influence of which Baron Pino, the late Austrian governor of the province, tried to dispel. Causing a boat to be conveyed over the pass in a bullock cart, he launched it on the fatal water, and accompanied by a spirited volunteer in the person of the pretty mistress of a neighbouring posthouse, he pulled across, prevented only, it is to be presumed, by the presence of his companion from tempting the spirit of the lake still further by a plunge and a swim. Yet who doubts but that the legend will survive both his deed and himself.

A climb over vast slopes of debris leads out of the basin of the Lago Morto, and immediately on the opposite descent a lake of fair expanse, Lago Possino, or

* Two fine pictures by Pordenone hang on either side, one of them the Annunciation above referred to.

Sta. Croce, fills a more smiling scene, backed by white limestone mountains and a few pale peaks, which are the first symptoms of Dolomite and the true Cadore country. Up this pass Titian must many a time have led his friends on mule or horse-back; and one should like to know for certain whether, for the sake of study among its beeches, he ever climbed the plateau on his right, to visit the great wood of the 'Consiglio,' then, as now, a government forest, supplying the Venetian arsenal with masts, oars, gun carriages, and the like.

Nothing of it can be seen from the road except a faint fringe of trees on the summit of lofty precipices, and for a long time curiosity was only stirred, and far from sated by what I heard and saw. Once, from the opposite ridge, I had a glimpse of its dense verdure, spreading to a distant interior; and more than once I heard of its vast extent, some ninety miles in circuit, and of its singular position, isolated upon one of the curious and extensive plateaux which distinguish this region, and of which the Sette Comuni district to the west offers another noticeable instance. I was told, too, of its abundance of game, including chamois on its highest summits and roebuck among its secluded glades, which alone are strictly preserved; of wolves and bears still haunting its recesses, and of numerous caves and curious hollows, rich in stalactite and stalagmite due to the limestone formation; of its magnificent beech foliage; and of a central cup-like meadow, seven miles

in circuit, in the midst of which stood the palazzo, or government office.

At last I learnt a little more, though but little still. One fine autumn day, not without dear friends in company to share the novel pleasure, I crossed the tedious torrent beds, wasting many a mile, which sweep from the north into the Possino Lake, and reached the wretched little village of Farra, the Calais or the Dover of the great forest above. An evil-looking lad served as guide and porter, and crossing one more horrid waste of stones, the climb began upon a track as punishing as steepness and loose rock fragments could make it. An hour brought us to an oratory planted on a spur, with mountain, lake, and vale spread out beneath; and beyond this the shade of beeches, and a softer path, and opening dells, and backward glimpses of blue distance framed in the glowing foliage, were abundantly rewarding. Half an hour further the edge of the plateau was reached, where a small church wooed the wayfarer with its sylvan bell, and a small osteria offered a bench, a table, and some bread and wine. Hence the winding way followed a succession of glades such as beech forests alone possess: now it was arched closely over with heavy leafage; now it wandered into sunlight and opener spaces, where sometimes the rim of distant wood was seen rising to the sky. Two or three miles of this, and then we issued on the sudden charm of a vast undulating meadow, from which the wood,

receding, rose on all sides in soft and softer purples, to a great circle of peaks and bosses where, here a pearly cloud reposed, and there the lucid sky went down behind, giving the impression that the whole scene floated like an island in the air. In the centre, upon a small knoll, rose the building where inn, and office, and church are collected under one roof, commanding, as may be gathered from the description already given, a view of most peculiar beauty.

This great meadow is let out as summer feeding-ground, and though many of the herds had gone below, including several horses which we had met on our way up, there were still enough to speckle the surface, and to fill the air with the tinkling of their bells. Several small chalets for use of the numerous herdsmen, and for storing hay, lay dotted about on the edges of the wood, which gracefully followed the curving of the surface in perfect park-like fashion. A very fair dinner was supplied to us, and is, I believe, generally to be obtained at the central 'Palazzo,' which is in charge of a man living rent-free for the purpose of providing entertainment and sleeping quarters, if needful, for the officials and guardians of the forest, as well as sportsmen and people concerned either with the timber or the flocks. Beech forms the staple of the wood, but, towards the east and the higher mountain girdle, there are dark tracts of pine, and in places some larches have been planted. We saw but few trees of aged growth, excepting some on the edge of the great

meadow, picturesquely straggling over an eminence. Our visit lasted but a few hours. I fancy weeks might have been not too much to explore all the points of interest, and especially for a sportsman, who, respecting only the roebuck, may shoot at will at certain seasons, on payment of ten francs per annum.

And now for Titian. I confess the very probable connection of this forest with his landscape studies added greatly to its interest. If, as we are told, at thirty years of age he spent three months in the country for the background of his picture of the 'Flight into Egypt,' and painted a 'St. John in the Wilderness' as a result of a visit to Cadore, may we not believe that this great wood, familiar to him alike from its public importance, and from his frequent passage beneath its guardian precipices, must have furnished some of that inspiration which made the woodland one of his happiest themes?

For here again Titian was modern. That early Italian dislike of the forest, upon which Mr. Ruskin eloquently expatiates, did not influence the mind of this man, native to woods and mountains, and seeking them every summer. He is the first, so far as I am aware, who took to the forest for purposes of art; but it eminently suited the genius of his mind. Where better could he find the magnificent gloom in which he delighted than in forest depths, among masses of foliage, backed, it might be, by banks of solemn cloud? Or, what more fascinating to an eye like his than the

glinting light among the boles of trees?—or the orange glow of the west flaming between the stems? Or to his sweeping pencil stroke what more seductive than the wreathing, yet vigorous, self-asserting forms of trunks and branches? More than all, what richer luxury of colour could nature offer to him, the poet of colour—than in autumn woods? This autumnal tone predominates throughout his landscape, and, apart from artistic choice, it should be remembered that autumn would be especially the season when he would be most familiar with landscape beauty. Snows and floods on the one hand, and the spring gaieties of Venice on the other, would discourage a journey to Cadore till summer were well advanced, and he would scarcely return before the cold nights drove him down again.

Three subjects may be named as particularly illustrating Titian's feeling for trees and woodland. The ever to be lamented Peter Martyr; the St. Jerome in the Brera at Milan; and the woodcut of St. Francis receiving the stigmata. In this latter piece the trees that stretch across the whole composition, leaving the landscape to be seen between their contorted trunks, while their branches are laced over the sky, are as fine in their way as the group of Apostles in the Assumption. It may be added that nothing pleased Titian better than to show light, or distant objects, between the stems of trees, or under their arching branches.

Passing the lake of Sta. Croce, whose further shores are sprinkled with cheerful villages, and continuing for

a few miles through a pleasant country, the traveller comes suddenly upon the Piave again—the same that by a long railway bridge he had crossed below Conegliano, but which he now touches at a point where, rushing out of a deep rocky rift, it turns abruptly to spread its waste of waters through the fair Belluno country. It traverses this for many miles, till, again reverting to its southward course, it issues through a narrow defile upon the Venetian plain. Tradition states that once it took the direct course to Serravalle which our route has followed, but that it was stopped and diverted by the enormous rock-fall which now separates the lakes of Morto and Sta. Croce. I am not aware how far scientific observation would confirm this belief, though some geologists support it, and the statements of certain Roman authors are adduced in proof. A bridge of various history, the Capo di Ponte, here spanned the stream for centuries, but it was blown up by the Austrians in 1866. Its buttresses still contain Venetian work, and may have seen the chivalry of Maximilian marching south, Massena and his ragged regiments pressing eastward, or, what is more to our purpose, the peaceful cavalcade of Titian.

It is here that, looking down the course of the stream, the lovely vista of the Val di Mel, with Belluno in its midst, opens to the west; and before continuing our journey to Cadore, we must explore that country a little, since I take it to have had perhaps a larger influence than any other upon the landscape of Titian.

CHAPTER III.

TITIAN AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

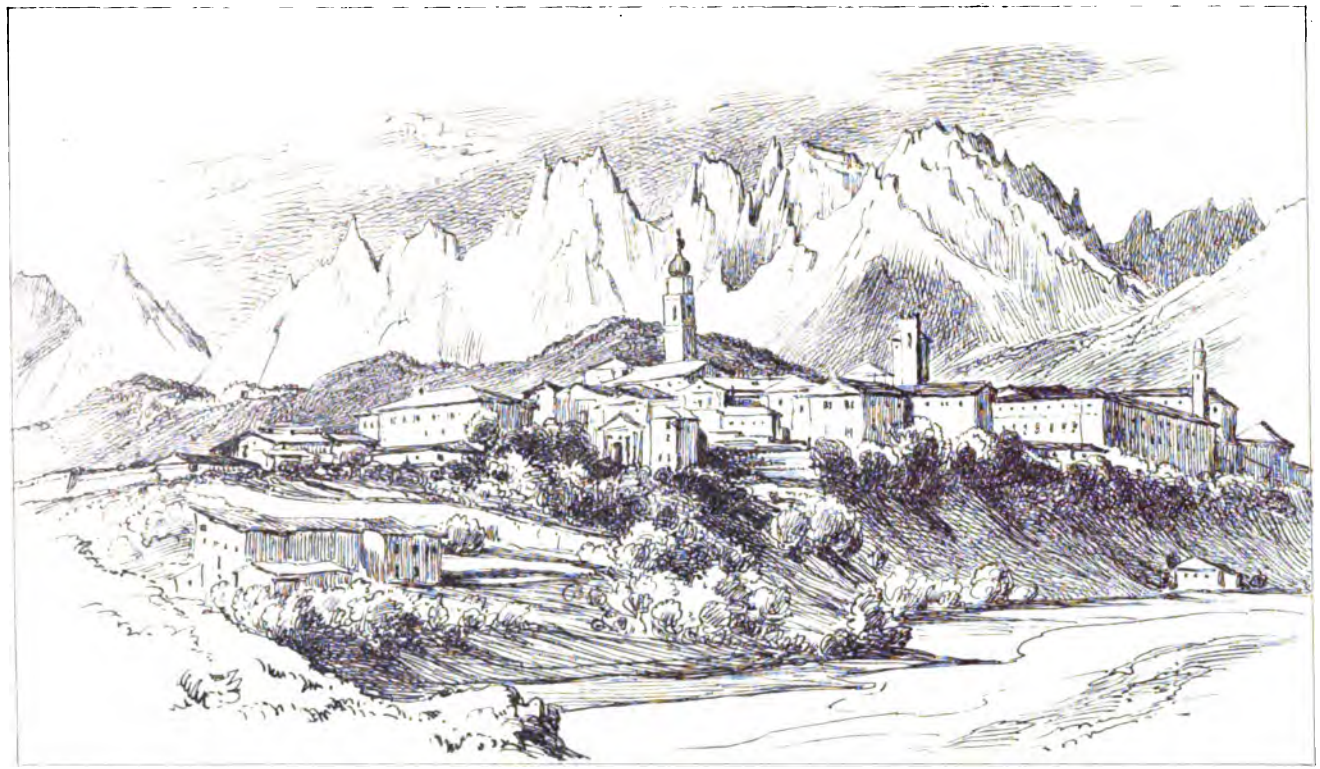
Belluno and the Val di Mel—The Belluno Titians—Belluno scenery and Titian's landscape—Titian's farmsteads—Visit to Cimolais—Titian's mountains—Titian's dolomite—The dolomites of Bellini, Bonifazio, and others—Val di Zoldo and Zoppè—Approach to Cadore.

THE Val di Mel soon displays its charm as, after passing through the village of Capo di Ponte, the traveller, leaving the high road that here enters the veritable Alpine zone of mountains, turns leftward with the lofty campanile of the Duomo of Belluno, five miles distant, pointing out his course. The valley is soft with rural beauty, a beauty half Italian and half English. White buildings, country houses of the pleasantest sort, partly villa and partly farmstead, sparkle on every side, surrounded by trim cut alleys of beech and hornbeam. Bowery lanes wander among careless orchards (where the friendly folks insist upon filling your hands and pockets with apricots or walnuts), and lose themselves in a network of green fields, or enter upon bits of open common; and there are considerable tracts of woodland. On the south, the valley is shut in by a long range of down-like hills, open and tempting to the foot; but

upon these the eye will seldom rest by reason of the excelling grandeur of the northern side, where the broad valley is fenced in by romantic forms, chiefly dolomite, towering peak behind peak, crag on crag, in grand array, and fading into distance both east and west.

Belluno and Feltre are the two sister cities of this noble vale. About twenty miles apart, they have always shared the like fortunes in the never-ending troubles of North Italy; but Venice was their natural lord, and to Venice they were generally faithful.

Belluno stands finely upon an abrupt promontory at the junction of the Ardo with the Piave, but its splendour now, alas! consists only in its situation. The cathedral of Palladian architecture, but externally unfinished, rules, with its blank walls, the south and west; St. Michael, the favourite war saint of the Longobards, flourishing his trumpet from the summit of the campanile. San Stefano is the only other church of importance; though there are two or three interesting little churches, and some, devoted now to secular purposes, with sculptured façades that exclaim against the profanity within. A rather fine specimen of Venetian architecture fronts the cathedral in the Palazzo dei Rettori. The course of the old walls is pretty well marked through the midst of the present city by an occasional tower, or massive portal; and from one of the gateways, picturesquely ruined and tufted with wallflowers, a steep



Belluno

street descends to the Piave, where a broken bridge, destroyed several years back in flood, stems, with its remaining buttresses, the rushing water. A wooden make-shift serves, and probably will long serve, for the traffic; and across this, and climbing a little way up the slopes, the view of Belluno is superb. For the rest, it only remains to speak of the wide grass-grown Piazza del Pape, thus named from Pope Gregory XVI., a native of Belluno, the interest of which consists in the lovely view down the valley from its western end.

Feltre—*old* Feltre—for there is a modern town straggling along the post road, stands deserted on a hill where the ancient massive houses shoulder closely together. It has suffered more than Belluno from the fierceness of war, for it is more easily reached both from the Venetian plain and from the hostile city of Trent. Climb the long dead street, and in the deserted piazza at the top you will find the gaol-like front of a townhall, with all the emblems of Venetian supremacy defaced, one of the acts of ruthless licence which followed the French revolutionary occupation. History broods gloomily over the place; but if you seek what was once the terrace of the castle, hard by the piazza, a sudden grandeur strikes the eye in the long line of dolomite peaks stretching on the north as far as eye can reach, towards and beyond Belluno.

That Titian had much to do with Belluno, might

have been guessed from its neighbourhood to, and intimate, though often inimical, relations with Cadore. But there is direct evidence to the fact in the records of several pictures painted for Bellunese families and churches. Among the former were the Palatini, a family said to have originally fled from Hungary, or more probably from Hungarians, and to have first settled in the secluded village of Zoppè, between Belluno and Cadore, at both which places branches of the family afterwards settled. Titian was employed by them all, but the little mountain village alone retains a Palatini picture. In Belluno itself, an Adoration of the Magi in the church of San Stefano, is the only one for which Titian's hand is claimed. It has, however, been so damaged and retouched, as to convey but a poor idea of the original work; and a venerable sitting figure in the foreground, described by Ticozze, seems to have wholly vanished. Yet, as an early engraving of the picture by T. van Kessel gives no hint of him, I am inclined to suspect a lapse of memory on Ticozze's part, or that altar ornaments obscured the action of a white bearded king meekly kneeling on his knees. Fortunately for our purpose the sky and landscape background remain untouched, though in the dark situation of the picture they are difficult to make out. The landscape shows a fine mountain-form, darkly blue; and the mist stealing along its base, and just touched by the first flush of dawn, which drew the admiration of Ticozze, is still recognisable. Of this

mountain, very characteristic of Titian's style, I shall have occasion to speak again. Above, among clouds that begin to lift and roll away, the guiding star breaks out with darting effulgence. There are repetitions of this picture; one of them is in the Madrid Gallery, but how far identical, or which may be the original, I cannot say (pl. ix. fig. 6).

The passage of the French armies, the suppression and destruction of churches, the poverty of the Bellunese families, have all contributed to rob the Belluno valley of its Titians. Yet one of some note among the works enumerated by his biographers, which was painted for the church of Mel, a village on the southern slopes of the valley to which it gives its name, and about twelve miles below Belluno, remains there still.

The excursion is interesting on more than one account, and a good road is now under construction, furnished with bridges for the numerous and broad torrent beds that interposed serious difficulties in the old one. There is a special cheerfulness in the scenery. The country houses of several noble families, with the avenues, if somewhat grass-grown, bright with flowers, occupy lovely situations among the richly wooded hills, rising southward into the Alpine pasture of extensive downs; while all along the northern side beyond the circling river, the woodland, more broken and diversified by villages and villas, slopes upward to the mountains, which there challenge

used to amuse himself in catching birds with nets. The spot, which I missed seeing, would be worth visiting, since the pencil was probably quite as often in his hand as the bird snare, and the view must be fine.*

As it happens, almost the only definite statement connecting the great master's landscape studies with any one scene, refers to a sequestered mill on the stream of the other Ardo, some three miles from the city. Narrow, thickly-hedged lanes lead towards it, up and down the hills, and after passing through the village of Vezzano, and one mile short of Bolsano, a break in the wattled fence and a steep path show the way down hill on the right to Colontola, which is simply a cottage or two, a farm, and a water mill in a narrow gorge. Clouds blurred the romantic mountain forms above on my only visit, and Titian's way of mixing up his scenes, and adjusting foregrounds to backgrounds to suit his fancy, renders it difficult to verify the story; but there are two etchings by Count Caylus from Titian's drawings, unfortunately in the lowest amateur style, either of which may have had this Colontola mill for a motive, as they almost certainly had this Belluno country for inspiration.

* Though, for the reason of its extent of sky, I have supposed the scene of Her Majesty's fine landscape Titian to have been at Manza, I cannot but suspect that it lies here. Just so might the desolate windings of the Piave glimmer in the twilight from Trichiana; just so might part of the Tyrol range stand out against the west, and the tall campanile of Lentiai rise from the woods below.

Colontola. Titians Mill

Yet, curiously, it must have been from near this very spot, probably from the opposite high bank of the Ardo, not far from the village of Caverzano, and within an easy walk from Belluno, that he took the mountain forms, and noted the sublime effect upon them of evening light, introduced in the already quoted Madonna and St. Catherine of the National Gallery (pl. iv. fig. 1). The lines of hill and mountain are identical with a record in my sketch-book, and the sharp-pointed hill, almost lost in the rays, is one of the most familiar features in the neighbourhood of Belluno. In this case, too, both distance and foreground, the latter composed of undulating wooded hills, agree to the actual scene. The picture came from the Escurial, but the supposition that it was painted in Spain is, perhaps, refuted by this identification.

Apart, however, from these local matters, there are at least three particulars in which the influence of Belluno scenery may be especially traced. Titian's liking for the forest has been already noticed, but there are many examples among his works, and especially in his drawings, of a wooded landscape, the charm of which is of a different kind. I mean that clustering, tufted, dwarf arborescence, which, spreading up and down, over hill and dale, cresting knolls and crags, and creeping up to the foot of old castle towers, covers a broken country like a soft growth of exaggerated moss. This is very characteristic of Italian Alpine scenery, and it is found in abundance in the Val di Mel.

Again: another characteristic of Titian's landscape, and new in his time, is his perception of its domestic charm—the sweetness of a home landscape. A cottage, a farm, a mill, take the place with him of the temples, towers, and lordly palaces of town-bred painters. He delights in the peaceful association of man with nature. Honest travellers on a country track, or sleeping in the shade; the peasant going forth to labour, or returning with his tools; the woodman busy in his forest craft; the fisherman and bird-fancier; the high-roofed, quaintly gabled farm, with its nondescript surroundings, and all set snugly on the bosky knoll—scenes where security and sunny days go hand in hand together, but not without the hint of mountain peak and louring cloud to point the contrast—these are his favourite subjects. But they never would have been so to a thorough Venetian. They show us the man of the hills—the breezy, happy hills: the man of many pleasant memories, upon the sward, beside the brook, under the bending boughs: the man who carried no city apprehensions or city squeamishness to country places, but was at home anywhere under the broad heaven, and so was able to antedate the most modern features of modern landscape art. Now, though he might owe much of this feeling to his native Cadore, and the lower Ceneda country is not without the charm, yet to this Belluno scenery he was, I think, most indebted for his genuine farmstead life. Cadore is too Alpine; Ceneda too near the level,

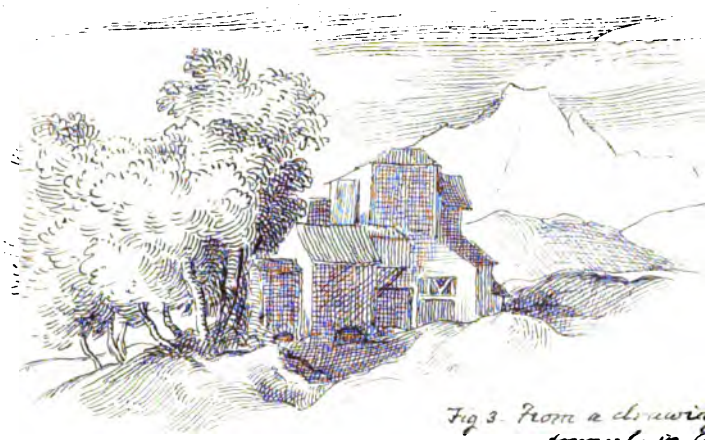


Fig 3. From a drawing formerly in the Lely Coll.

Fig 4 From a drawing in the Uffizi

Fig 5. From a Drawing in the Uffizi

sultry, and perhaps unsafe plains. The Val di Mel, on the contrary, midway, lapped among the hills, sheltered from war, sweetly open to the sun and breeze, verdant, broken, bright with orchards and with glossy bluffs, was the very scene for all that loving intercourse with nature which makes the bliss of country life.

And there is another point in Titian's domestic landscape identifying it with this neighbourhood. His farmhouses generally show a thatched and high pitched roof, very different from the usual style of Italian buildings, but which is not uncommon in this valley, and was probably once much more common. It was during a short excursion into the mountains at the head of the valley that I was most struck with this peculiarity and the otherwise Titianesque air of the farms and villages. The fact is explained by the exceeding seclusion of that curious district, which, approached from whatever quarter, opposes a menacing rampart of grey-scarred rock, with summits almost always entangled amongst heavy clouds; while glimpses of formidable peaks at every opening suggest an interior line of defence.

The spot at which I penetrated this forbidding, and yet tempting barrier, was where the torrent of the Vajont enters the Piave valley at Longarone, a few miles above Capo di Ponte; yet it was not by the torrent, which issues from a cleft, deep, dark, and inaccessible. The only track, a very stony path, surmounts

the northern precipices, and leads at a great height past the mouth of a cave which might have fitly lodged the St. Anthony or St. Jerome of pictorial art. The country people fancy the former, for they have placed a small oratory to that saint near its entrance, where they invariably stop to rest their burdens, all the merchandise of the valley being carried on their backs. The place commands, too, a striking view.* The Vajont valley itself, reached after a climb of about an hour and a half, is singularly bald, and owns but two villages, both clinging perilously to a slope of unusual steepness, and one of them planted on the verge of a huge rock-fall, where blocks as big as its houses, scattered down the path of ruin, suggest the imminence of another bombardment from above. These two hamlets with their stone walls and thatched roofs of a similar tint, look like patches of grey mud flung against the hill-side, and are too forlorn to meet a Titian's or any other painter's purpose. But the landscape soon gives symptoms of improvement, and at one point some rude steps descending under sheltering trees, and creeping round a face of overhanging rock, discloses a habitation, half hut and half cave, that might well suit a milder hermit than St. Anthony, and is such as Titian has more than once bestowed upon St. Jerome. A little further, and the charm of the

* In this cave, my friend and companion, Mr. G. C. Churchill, gathered a fine specimen of the rare fern, Asplenium Seelosii, peculiar to dolomite.

valley breaks suddenly on the eye in a delicious plot of level sward encircled by an amphitheatre of terraces, alternate walls of rock, and ledges of lovely pasture and wood, rising zenithwards; while in the midst a glittering cascade drops from the lowest edge of precipice almost upon the very roof of such a farmstead as Titian loved, reposing on velvet turf and shaded by two old trees. 'It is Arcadia,' we exclaimed, 'if not Friuli,'—for the frontier is somewhere hereabouts. An ascent through forest succeeds, to the summit of a low pass, marked by a chapel to S. Osvaldo, and then a short descent places you fairly within the stern defences by which nature would repel invading centuries, and keep 'progress' out.

At the head of a gently sloping plain, so guarded on all sides that you wonder where the streams can possibly find an exit, stands Cimolais, an antique village. How shall I describe it? Turn over the 'Paysages de Titian,' and you will see the like on many a page. Each dwelling is a group of buildings, thatched for the most part and vine-bespread, but each with iron-grated windows and shut in with walls, and entered by a single gateway with jealously high doors. The solitary Friulian village rules a sweet seclusion; there is none other within sight. But it has not felt itself safe of old time. It has heard of armies down below; its watchers on the hills have seen the distant smoke of ravage; fierce marauders, Hungarian or Sclavonian, have shown their pikes in the neighbouring glens, and so it

has squeezed itself into the highest corner of its paradise, and built itself about, each house for itself, but with opportunity for sudden flight to the inaccessible heights above, if need presses. Such it was, and such I trust it is, a precious waif of the old times, but of which I will not guarantee the impunity a single day, now that Italy is awake.

I have called the spot a paradise. No doubt it owed something of its charm to its sombre portals. It is not a garden, but a cheerful expanse, delighting the eye with the novelty of a smooth sheep-cropped common, interspersed with bright fields of maize and a profusion of coppice vegetation which climbs the hills, on all sides, to the foot of the rocky walls that enclose the whole. Clusters of trees give picturesque variety, and, under every cluster, the peeping porch of a most cosy dwelling adds to the impression of rural peace.*

A characteristic feature of this country marred, or perhaps enhanced, the impression. Cutting off the village from its meadows, and so much sunk from sight as to be scarcely seen till we stood upon its edge, there stretched a stony bleached expanse, in the midst of which a scanty but swift stream could scarcely be distinguished. Its dead level surface and great width—quite a third of a mile—the abruptness of its banks,

* I am glad to find my impression of this place confirmed by the opinion of Mr. Ball, who, in his recent 'Guide to the Eastern Alps,' says of Cimolais: 'It is a very singular place, with an air of seclusion and strangeness that is scarcely to be equalled elsewhere.'

and the suddenness with which it opposed itself to our intended evening stroll, rendered it very striking. A faint track across the desolation was dotted here and there with figures making homeward, but it lay like a river of death athwart our path. I mention it not only as an essential element in this particular scene, but as one which more or less distinguishes all the landscape with which Titian was familiar (though I never saw a more striking instance), and which contributed, if not obviously yet latently, to his treatment of it. The stern powers of nature lurk in the background of his most peaceful scenes.

And of these lurking powers, our walk that evening gave another reminder. On the furthest limit of the plain, while resting on the bank of just such another stony stream, the slow booming of one of nature's cannonades began to sound among the hills, and as we hastened back there presently opened to sight an awful blackness, mounded up behind the dolomitic forms, all ashy pale as if with prescient horror, that overhung Cimolais. From time to time it was seamed with lightning, till suddenly half the scene was blotted out by sheets of rain, while still we walked in dusty dryness. Our utmost speed had only brought us to the edge of the desolate river-bed in time to cross in safety, for in all directions the stones began to roll and rattle in the milky descending flood, and while still in the midst of its shelterless expanse, the blinding pelt began, so that we were sufficiently wet before reaching the homely

but hospitable little inn of the village. Such a storm Titian's bistre pen seldom failed to indicate even in his slightest drawings.

I may add that it is quite possible Titian was acquainted with this village, since it stands on an ancient but now disused track crossing the mountains from Cadore to Maniago and Spilembergo, at which latter place Titian spent some time one summer after the death of Aretino, giving instructions to, and painting the portrait of, the accomplished Irene, whose death soon afterwards, at nineteen years of age, caused universal lamentation.

But the chief identification of the Titian landscape with that of Belluno is to be found in the mountains. He was great in mountains, and that he was so forms his chief claim to greatness in landscape art. He, almost the first of painters, seems to have felt the abounding expressiveness of mountain lines, and to have rendered with a firm hand their strength and beauty, whether displayed in isolated aspiring forms, or as they stand grouped in graceful opposition. More than that; he first led the way in that appreciation of mountains, as among the grandest symbols that nature offers of power, mystery, duration, majesty, and the like, which, if not unrecognised in the earliest poetry, had yet slumbered through many ages of culture, and is distinctively a modern passion.

As, for instance, I doubt if there is an earlier ex-

ample than in Titian of a dark, distant, jagged mountain outline, vividly relieved by a glowing evening sky. Or again, of that striking effect of distance, isolation, and mystery, produced by the apparition of a mountain summit peering from behind nearer ranges of hills, when peak or crest lifted in air, and bright with beams from some hidden source of light, seems to give sudden hint of some strange unknown region in the far beyond. Of such ghost-like but luminous shapes, Titian offers frequent instances. If, too, the gloom of forests charmed him he was eminently susceptible to the gloom and awfulness of mountains, which, alien alike to classic and mediæval taste, are so grateful to the modern; and it was surely not only for the convenience of deep purples and rich blues, that his mountain forms so often sweep darkly along the horizon, like a visible thunder-peal, but that he felt their solemn grandeur.

And it must have been from the same appreciation that he made so much of the fellowship between clouds and mountains. Other painters had dealt in mountain shapes of delicate blue reposing in pure ether, and for clouds scattered a few woolly patches in the void above. Titian, a mountain man and better taught, brought the vapours down among his hills, gave them involution and coherence, wrapped them round his mountain peaks, or piled them into vast competing bulks far into the sky. In a word, without the delicate observation of Turner, or of Turner's great Expounder, he was habitually conscious, as

well of the poetry as of the artistic capabilities latent in the interaction of these two great landscape powers, and 'composed' mountain and cloud together, each answering to each like the parts of a chorus.

And again there was in Titian a perception of that physiognomy of mountains which gives them personality, and makes them almost instinct with emotion. Sometimes he places them in sphinx-like attitudes of repose, embodiments of enormous passive force; sometimes they writhe and twist like hooded giants struggling to be free from bonds. Or he sets them as tutelary powers to preside over some gentle scene, or nestling village. For Titian regarded them less as enemies than friends; not as a lowlander shrinking from their awfulness, but as a mountaineer, familiar with, almost welcoming their terror, because conscious of their encompassing strength. The valley among hills with its sequestered human life, and walls, and towers, and roofs sheltered beneath some giant mass, or clinging confidingly to its sides, is a scene he often dwells upon.

In one respect he was not a modern. His avoidance of the snowy Alps that must often have rimmed the prospect from his windows, might seem to argue insensibility to an aspect always enchanting to us. But this would be rather owing, I suspect, to an inherent dislike of snow in the great colourist as utterly incongruous with the rich low tones he loved. He dismissed that effect as inapplicable to art, and we

Fig. 6. From the adoration of the Magi at Belluno

From the Presentation of the Virgin Fig. 7

Fig. 8. From the Supper at Emmaus

shall find that he refused it when even specially pertaining to his subject.

But in expressing mountain character he was helped by a type of form peculiarly his own. Mr. Ruskin speaks rather slightingly of a 'blue abstraction of a hill from Cadore or the Euganeans,' as if he attempted little more, and that with little care. I would claim for his mountains far more of substance, and build, and character than this seems to imply; and if it be strangeness of contour that is referred to, that is the very test of their truth.

The mountain forms that Titian chiefly affected rise with abrupt and startling suddenness in his landscape, generally among low hills, sometimes beyond a distant shore. They are towers rather than mountains, shattered walls rather than cliffs, or they break from a ridgy height like colossal tusks. Frequently one of singular prominence rules alone a landscape, as in pl. xx. and pl. xii. fig. 12, from the 'Omnia Vanitas;' or a pair, as in pl. ix. fig. 7, from the 'Presentation of the Virgin.' Sometimes a scarped and battlemented mass rises darkly amidst broken hills, as in the 'Supper at Emmaus' (fig. 8). Again, and these occur principally in his drawings, a series of craggy summits, advancing or receding, fill a long perspective (pl. xii. fig. 15). While again, elsewhere, they stand out wild and bold, like opposing fortresses, without apparent connection. Once more: a singular slab-like look, or as if they were cut out of boards, distinguishes his mountains,

and will perhaps to many appear their most unreal feature.

Now these are the exact characteristics of dolomite mountains, of which in our journey to Cadore, itself in the midst of them, we meet with the first examples in this Val di Mel. Here, indeed, they are of no great height, and the immediate hills above Belluno are of a different formation; they are but outworks of the great dolomite region, but they are wonderfully varied and picturesque. Not only are the peaks noble and graceful in themselves, but standing rank behind rank in almost interminable array, they disclose in perspective the most charming combinations: here, crowding in a sheaf of spear-points, there falling gracefully apart; here towering dark and imminent, there leaping lightsome in the air. Forming in this valley part of a large landscape, they were more suitable to Titian's purpose than most of their fellows, and I should judge were more often in his mind or his sketch-book. As usual we must not look for exact identification; but the mountains in pl. x., copied from a large drawing in the Louvre, resemble the Bellunese mountains in relation to the city, and may be compared with those of pl. vi.; while the view in fig. 15, from a drawing of the Magdalen, fairly indicates the noble features of the Val di Mel. I have already suggested a possible remembrance of them in the Duke of Devonshire's St. John.

But perhaps the best illustration at once of the style of Belluno scenery and of Titian's treatment of it is

From a Drawing by Titian in the Louvre

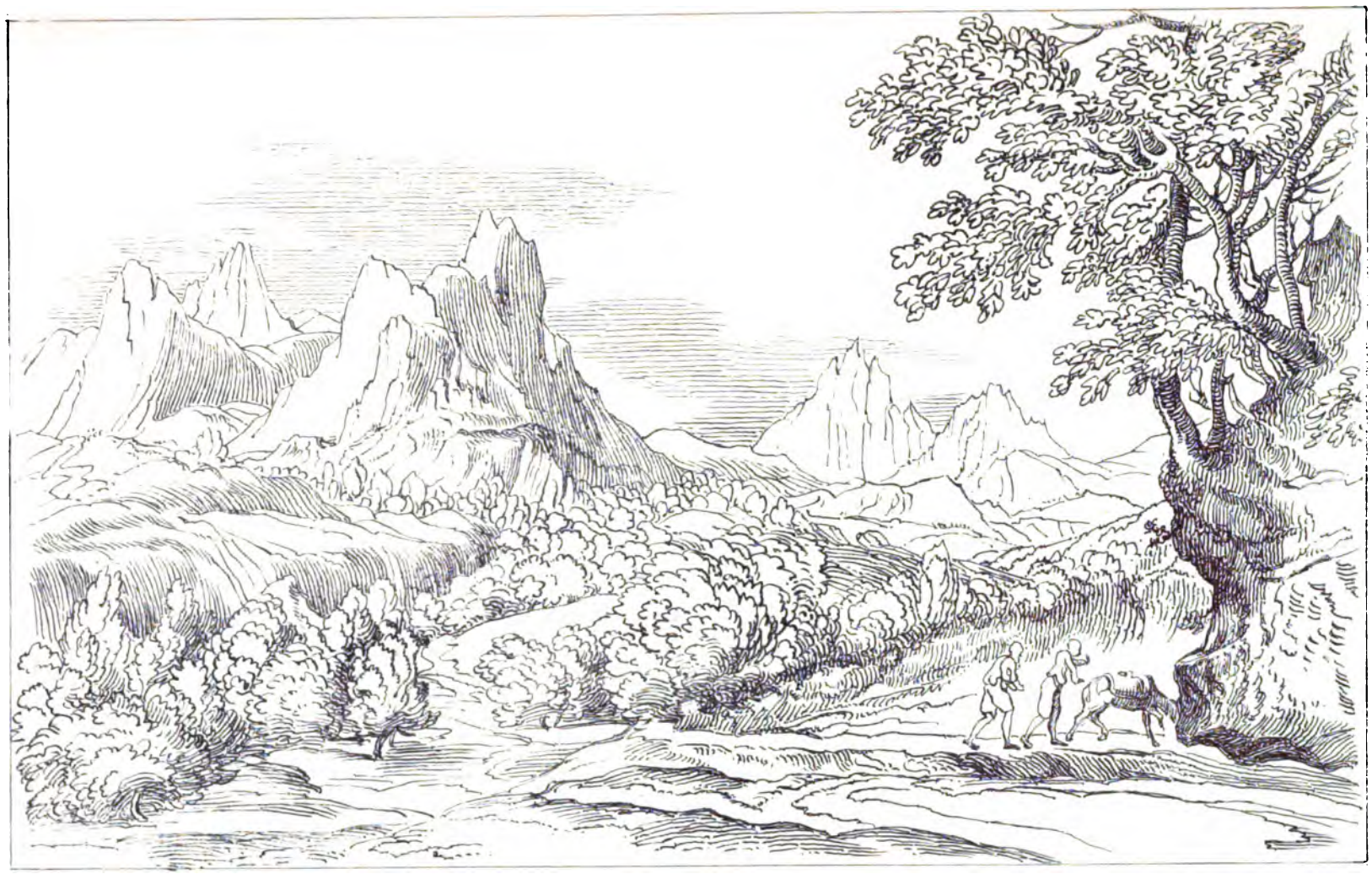
given in pl. xi., a reduced copy from part of a large drawing formerly in Mr. Munro's collection, and of which there exists a woodcut by Domenico Campagnola. In the original drawing I may mention there is a vacant space in the foreground, which in the woodcut is filled in with a pair of lions, while the figure of St. Jerome, likewise not in the drawing, has been introduced under the rocks on the right and hidden in their shadow. The rich vegetation in the middle distance reaching up to the crags, and the picturesque forms of the latter, nearly resembling yet not actually dolomite, with the indications of a mule track wandering through the woods, and over the rounded billowy pastures at the foot of the rocks, towards a col on the sky line, are thoroughly Bellunese features.

Nor could there be more perfect specimens of dolomite than the two mountain forms in the distance beneath the overhanging boughs, and the third peering up behind the crags on the left. The 'sword-bladed' character due to the peculiar weathering of dolomite—and of which the view of the Sexten Thal, on p. 89, supplies an instance—is admirably given. It proves the accuracy of Titian's observation; so individually accurate in this case, that I am confident of having somewhere seen these precise shapes, and do not yet despair of one day finding them before me. This drawing illustrates also the way in which Titian caught the sudden apparitional look of which no for-

mation gives more striking instances than the dolomite, and which frequently occurs through the gaps of the nearer hills in the Val di Mel.

Yet it must be confessed that Titian, though usually very faithful to the individual forms of dolomite, is sometimes untrue in their setting. This is the case in some of the instances already quoted, and in the mountain on the horizon in the celebrated Three Ages of the Ellesmere Gallery. Dolomite peaks do not rise so baldly from a sea or plain, for however remarkable in contour and isolation, they are yet always associated in mountain groups, and are seldom visible from the low lying country, unless indeed an exception may be named in the serrated range behind the baths of Recoaro, which are seen from the railway between Vicenza and Verona. Sometimes too there occurs in the Titian dolomite, but much more rarely, an exaggeration of form such as in pl. xx.

In his paintings, however, he very seldom allows any falsity to nature. Sobriety of judgment seems always then to restrain his hand if it had run a little wild in dashing off on the spot, with a reed pen, some marvellous scene, and he becomes solidly real. Of this no better instance can be given than the landscape already quoted of the Emmaus. The mountain is unmistakably dolomite, but yet of a sort that does not disturb the repose of the occasion by any strangeness of form. A particular characteristic of Titian's treatment is however yet to be noticed. The dolomite precipices



From a Titian Drawing in the Authors possession

themselves are startling, not only in form but in tint. They are either of an ashy grey, a pale yellow, or a pale salmon colour; often at a distance they may suggest snow. But Titian would no more represent this than snow itself, and therefore almost always preferred those conditions of atmosphere and light, which revealed them only as dark and solemn shapes; though sometimes throwing a stormy sky behind, he allowed a momentary glimpse of their stark and awful pallor.

Titian, however, was not quite the only painter of dolomite. A perfect example is to be found in a picture attributed to one of the Bellini, in the Pitti at Florence, No. 343. Such truth is there in form, in grouping, and in light and shade, that it must have been an exact transcript from nature (pl. xii. fig. 9).

From Cima da Conegliano we may naturally expect some specimen of a mountain formation, so near his native place; and one such appears in his Madonna and Child in the National Gallery, where a dolomite peak rises in the blue distance, pure and still, according to his manner of observing nature. Giorgione offers few examples, and these less decidedly dolomitic; yet a delightful little evening bit in a picture in the Louvre contains two mountain forms, the one pale, the other dark, and grouped as only nature groups, suggesting dolomitic originals.

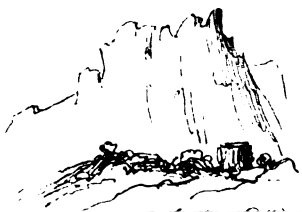
Bonifazio affords frequent instances. Fig. 14, from a drawing in the British Museum, is one; and another

appears in his 'Wise Men's Offering,' No. 572 in the Academy at Venice. Similar mountain forms are also to be found in Palma Vecchio. These were all Venetians, who had dolomite at their doors. How shall we explain the fact, however, that Tintoretto, whom Mr. Ruskin justly associates with Titian, in landscape grandeur, yields no single example?—so far, at least, as I am aware. Was it that he avoided the neighbourhood familiar to his great rival? Bassano, also, though the Val di Mel and the far more extraordinary scenery of Primiero* were within a day's journey of his native city, never introduces the dolomite type of mountain, nor indeed scarcely mountains at all, preferring apparently the rounded hills of Asolo.

Besides the Venetian painters, there are scarcely any who have delineated dolomite, for certain strange fantastic shapes adopted both in earlier and later eras of art are not so. The distinction lies chiefly in this, that the genuine dolomites are explicitly *mountain* forms rising amidst and overtopping subject hills, while the spurious ones are simply queer and impossible crags, without organic connection with the landscape. Some few exceptions occur to me. In the portrait of Monna

* Primiero (also within a day's journey of Belluno) is in a remarkable *cul de sac*, and forms the retreat of an interesting community, which first found refuge there during the devastating wars of Attila. The hand of Titian is claimed for a St. Mark, in the curious little church of Transacqua, where also is, or was, a fair fresco copy of Tintoretto's 'Crucifixion.' See 'Dolomite Mountains,' p. 454.

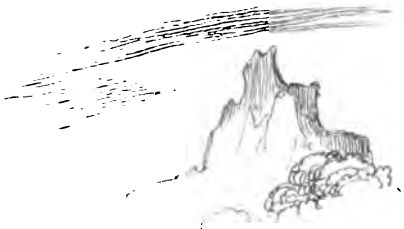
G. Bellini 343 Pitti
Fig 9



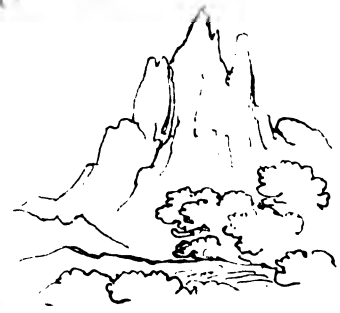
andrea del Sarto Pitti
Fig 10

Beltraffio Mus Q
Fig 11

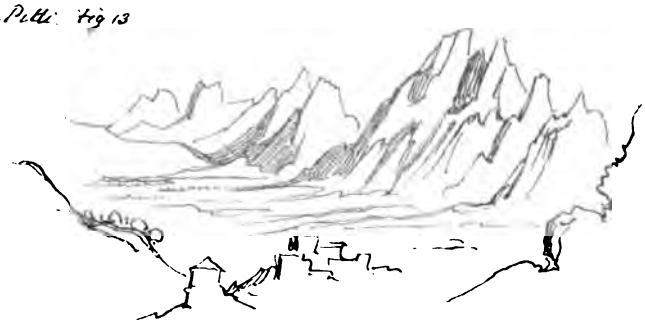
Titian, from the Omnia Vanitas
Fig 12



Palma Vecchio
252 Pitti Fig 13



Bonifazio from
a drawing in Brit. M.
Fig 14



Titian from a Magdalen
Fig 15

Lisa,* by Leonardo da Vinci, there is a singular range of mountains which seems to belong to this formation, reminding one that his native district of the Lower Arno is within easy reach, if not within sight, of the dolomite mountains of Carrara. And in two pictures by Andrea del Sarto in the Pitti, illustrating the History of Joseph, are some very dolomitic shapes indeed (fig. 10), the introduction of which, if not to be explained in the same manner, is possibly owing to Andrea's intimacy with Sansovino, which may have led him sometime into the neighbourhood of the more

* In a note to the section upon landscape painting in his 'Cosmos,' Humboldt quotes from his correspondent Von Rumohr, who questions the correctness of the suggestion, first, it appears, made by Humboldt himself, that 'the singular pointed forms of mountains in the earliest Italian landscapes' were derived from 'the Tyrolese dolomitic cones, by which travelling artists might have become impressed in the transit between Italy and Germany.' Von Rumohr rather believes, 'that these must be regarded, either as very old conventional mountain forms in antique bas-reliefs and mosaic works, or as unskilfully foreshortened views of Soracte, and similarly isolated mountains in the campagna of Rome.' Humboldt adds, 'to indicate more precisely the conical and pointed mountains here in question, I recall the fanciful landscape which forms the background in Leonardo da Vinci's universally admired picture of Monna Lisa.' Von Rumohr's observations are no doubt just with respect to much of early Italian landscape. True dolomite, however, is seldom to be mistaken. The peculiar cleavage, of which there cannot be a better example than in the distant group in Titian's drawing (pl. xi.), marks it to all those familiar with the formation. The nearer cliffs in that drawing are probably not dolomite. As to the Monna Lisa I have only an engraving to refer to, and can but give the impression that the mountains there are not conventional, and carry traces of a study of dolomite. See also fig. 11, from Leonardo's friend Beltraffio.

remarkable Venetian examples. Perugino and Raphael occasionally display dolomite shapes in their delicate blue distances; whether such exist among their native Umbrian mountains, I am not able to say.

It is, however, with Titian that the dolomites are inseparably connected. No one else dwelt upon them so persistently; from no one else have we such a series of studies determined apparently by their presence. He must have loved the vigour they imparted to composition, the audacity of their lines, the picturesqueness with which they vandyked the sky, or wrestled with the clouds, and their sharp clear drawing. He loved them most of all, perhaps, because they were shapes of grandeur printed upon his boyish mind among his native fields; because, from year to year, they greeted his return to dear familiar scenes,—towards which it is time to resume our journey.*

Belluno has tempted us five miles out of our route to Cadore, as it no doubt frequently tempted Titian. Returning to Capo di Ponte, we must now address ourselves to ascend the savage defile, down which the Piave comes sweeping from the north. At most

* I may be allowed to refer those who wish to study dolomite scientifically to my friend, Mr. G. C. Churchill's 'Physical Description of the Dolomite Region,' forming the last chapter in the 'Dolomite Mountains.' I may add that Richthofen's remarkable theory, that Schlern dolomite is nothing less than a *coral reef*, seems to be gaining acceptance.

seasons it is but a network of swift currents among sheets of sand and stones, sadly perplexing the narrow timber rafts, each manned by four half-naked fellows, red-brown as the brownest red of Titian's satyrs, and frantically working long oars at each perilous turn, that come shooting one by one from the dark recess above. But, at this point, let the traveller notice some remarkable forms coming into view in front, for these are part of the Marmarolo, which all Cadore people claim as particularly Titian's mountain, and which, if it were so, I am inclined to think he more often sketched from this direction, where it was the first to greet his approach, and the last to bid him farewell of his native hills, than from any other. Moreover it is, I am disposed to believe, the original of that striking mountain form in the 'Adoration of the Magi' at Belluno, on the side of which is curled the dawn-tinted mist, just as he might have seen it on some early start for Cadore (pl. ix. fig. 6).

The severity of the landscape increases at Longarone, a few miles on. From this place I have already taken the reader upon the short excursion to quaint Cimolais, and here all lovers of romantic scenery will excuse another digression which we are called upon to make, in the opposite direction, up the lateral valley of Zoldo. A sublime and solitary gorge, where the mule path is carried above tremendous depths, or skirts the torrent roaring between magnificent walls of dolomite, leads in about twelve miles to an open cheerful spot,

enlivened with several villages and busy with small iron forges, principally employed in the manufacture of nails. At this point the valley forks, and Forno, the place of chief importance, stands. This name always implies the existence of mines and furnaces at an early period; and silver, lead, and iron ore were once worked here to a great extent, as numerous traces of much antiquity attest. So late even as the seventeenth century, the metals in this valley were a source of great wealth to the well-known Venetian family of Grimani; and though its celebrity in this respect presently declined, the Val di Zoldo remained in the eighteenth century a place of note, and had the honour of giving birth to Brustalon, famous for his carvings in wood, some fine specimens of which perished along with the Peter Martyr in S. Giovanni e Paolo, though others are still to be seen in Venice as well as in Belluno.

But in more than one respect this valley is connected with our subject. In its southern and longest branch there stands upon the mountain slope a village of 'Tiziano' named, like Titian himself, after the sainted bishop of Oderzo, who seems to have been the favourite protector of the neighbourhood. And again, in Titian's time, the valley was concerned with a notable feat of the Venetian arms illustrated by his pencil, the story of which we must not here forestall.

One other source of interest remains, and for this I must ask the reader to accompany me up the

northern branch of the valley, through a narrow entrance, and by a woody path penetrating a wild uninhabited gorge, but where, if clouds permit, a wonderful vision of towered dolomite glides now and again into view in front. After a climb of, say two hours, this shape reveals itself as the magnificent and dominating presence of the valley, as it is indeed of a great tract of country on all sides. It is the noble Sasso di Pelmo, which, as well from its height as its singular conformation, takes a chief place among all these mountains.

But did Titian ever tread this solitary path? Hanging upon a verdant shelf far above you, and close under the stupendous precipices of the Pelmo, you will see the clustering red cottages of a village, and among the roofs a little church. That is the Zoppè already mentioned, of which the cherished treasure is a Titian altarpiece, painted, according to the will of one of the Palatini, in 1526, and, it is said, during a visit to this spot occasioned by a pestilence raging at the time either at Venice or Cadore. It is one of the very few indubitable Titians yet remaining among his native mountains, and its preservation is due, less perhaps to the absolute seclusion of the spot, than to the devotion, in more senses than one, of the inhabitants, who, during the French invasion, secreted the picture in the wood behind the village, and at a later period resisted the temptation of a 'capful of ducats' offered by a Venetian dealer. In the Louvre, or else-

where, no doubt it would have been better preserved, for unfortunately the damp of its hiding-place, along with the smoke and dirt inevitable to an altarpiece, have inflicted great damage on the picture, which was far from repaired by the efforts of an unskilful restorer. The Virgin in the upper part suffered the most, but Sta. Anna below, with St. Jerome and St. Mark on either side, remain in pretty good preservation. The picture is of small dimensions, about four feet by three.

Apart from its picture, however, Zoppè deserves a visit for its romantic situation. The Pelmo is by no means the only grand feature of its scenery, for in the opposite direction, towards the east, is a line of jagged pinnacles rising suddenly in Monte Bosconero, into what might be likened to a huge stone hatchet, which I strongly suspect to have been the original of a certain singular shape appearing in more than one of Titian's drawings. Pl. xxx. gives a view of this mountain.

A pedestrian may very pleasantly reach Cadore from Zoppè, by crossing the hills to Vodo in the Ampezzo road; or from Forno he may cross a low pass to Cibiana and Valle, obtaining from the summit a distant and picturesque view of the little town. But for ourselves we must return with all speed to Longarone, and to the road, the only one on which wheels can travel, and which, before the days of roads, was always the direct route between Venice and her outlying dependency.

Zoppé and Sasso di Palmo

Two or three miles above Longarone, at a turn in the valley formerly protected by a castle, the true territory of Cadore is entered, a spot often fiercely contested in troublous times, and even so late as 1848, when the Cadore people here repulsed a large Austrian force.

But as yet the country is Cadore only in name; some ten miles of savage defile yet remain, with the Piave, white and furious below, and scarred naked tops among the clouds above. Then, at Perarolo, a little town of timber yards and sluices, a break occurs, and the Boita comes tumbling down a ravine to the left, with the old Ampezzo road hanging on its sides. As this gap opens upon the traveller, a pallid spectre suddenly fills it. It is the Antelao, which he has not seen since he left the lagune at Venice, eighty miles below, if he saw it then. Now, the cold grey precipices, and pinnacles wreathed about with clouds, show themselves for a moment only, since a new road, constructed by the Emperor Ferdinand, attacks at once the rocky hill dividing the Boita from the Piave, and with triumphant skill working round upon the Piave side, does not leave that river till it has finally conquered the steep, when it turns back upon its course to reach the valley of the Boita, and so pass into Tyrol.

It is just as the climb is nearly over, and as the road turns westward, that a small white town upon a neck of hill, due north, comes into sight, and, warned by Murray, people know that this is Cadore. But

there is little to please the eye at this point; bare fields and plots of peasant cultivation, looking like 'a tailor's pattern book unrolled,' stretch up the slope, and a few bold peaks peer up beyond. The village of Sotto Castello, indeed, juts out rather picturesquely on the steep side of the hill, which is crowned by a few almost undistinguishable remains of the castle, and descends abruptly to the ravine of the Piave; but it is almost the only romantic feature in this direction, and most travellers act as we did, when we first passed that way. Although the Red Book told us of a footpath across the fields by which we could see everything, and regain the road in an hour, yet—the petty difficulties that so often beset a tourist being against us, Venas, where we were to dine five miles further on, and Cortina, where we were to sleep, fifteen miles further still—we only read all there was to read about it, looked hard and long at the sequestered town from the carriage window, and passed on.

In another chapter I must tell how at last we made real acquaintance with the birthplace of Titian.

CHAPTER IV.

CADORE AS IT IS.

Cadore in L'Anonimo—Shape and character of the country—From Sexten to Cadore—The inn at Tai—The church at Pieve and its pictures—The Piazza and Pretura—Titian's house and the early fresco—Titian's visits to Cadore—The castle—The mountains, and Titian's use of them.

'L'ANONIMO,' as the author of a 'Life of Titian,' published in 1622, is usually termed, is the only one of his biographers who has given a description of the place of his birth, and which, derived evidently from personal knowledge, is quite refreshing after Vasari's vague 'five miles from the Alps,' and the sheep-like imitation of succeeding writers. He says:

'Titian was born at Pieve, the principal town in Cadore, a territory always very faithful to the most serene Republic of Venice, and used by the ancient Romans for the passage of their armies into Germany, as antique medals constantly found there testify. The castle is reputed impregnable, being placed upon a very high hill, which can only be ascended by a narrow and very difficult path, and which is surrounded by broken rocks and inaccessible precipices.

'It is no wonder, therefore, that in the fierce wars of the Emperor Maximilian against the most serene Republic, this place alone was able, through its situation and the fidelity of the people, to maintain itself against the fury of the enemy. Here resided always those most illustrious captains to whom the Republic committed the military command of the country, and at the foot of it is the place where the deputies elected to the Council of Cadore assemble. . . . . .

'This is not of great circuit, but prettily arranged. In the midst of the principal piazza is a fountain of limpid and fresh water, which with a sweet murmur pleases both eye and ear. All round are handsome houses, amongst which may be seen that in which Titian was born.'

In this single paragraph are touched off some of the most salient points, both in the history and physical features of Cadore, which is not only a town but a territory, dating from the earliest historical times, and not unimportant in connection with the fortunes of Venice itself. We have reached it by ascending the long ravine of the Piave, and it is this river which in its upper course traverses almost the whole of the Cadore country; but as the district spreads also westward, for some distance along the valley of the Boita, it may be roughly likened to a V, of which the arm to the right, representing the Piave valley, is much the longer. At the point of junction, within the V, towers

the mighty Antelao, the same that strikes the eye from Venice as the most prominent member of the mountain range circling on the north—the same that Titian drew from his garden. This is the ruling mountain genius of the Cadore country, but it more immediately impends over the Boita valley on the west, where it has at different times worked great mischief by enormous rockfalls, one of which in 1814 destroyed 300 people, while another in 1868 has buried a village. Outside the **V** on the left, i. e. to the west of the Boita and opposite the Antelao, is its rival the Sasso di Pelmo. And, outside the right hand, or Piave arm of the **V**, while there is no single mountain to challenge comparison with the two just named, yet a very wild dolomite range, much affecting the character of the landscape, there hems in the country to the east.

Between the two arms as they open out to the north, are two magnificent mountain masses; that of the Marmarolo, next to the Antelao; and a group, with no general name, to the north-east of Auronzo.

It will thus be seen how essentially Cadore is mountainous, and how the two valleys of the Piave and the Boita have necessarily become its main seats of population and industry. Yet there are numerous small lateral valleys, and many Alpine ledges and basins supporting their quota of inhabitants; and in Titian's time the populous district of Auronzo, formed by the Ansiei, a considerable affluent of the Piave from the

west, crossing almost from one arm of the V to the other, belonged to Cadore, from which indeed it has only been separated in modern times. I have already said that the right-hand arm is much longer than the other, yet formerly that left arm, then including the Ampezzo, was fully equal in length; but as the people sided with Maximilian in the Cambrai war,

VAL AURONZO.

it was at that time, and has remained ever since, attached to Tyrol. Its companion district on the east —Comelico—more loyal, still belongs to Cadore.

Although geographical details are perhaps of all others the most tedious, I have ventured upon thus much, since a clear idea of the Cadore territory is very necessary towards understanding the historical and other matters, all centring round the life of

Titian and the events of his time, which I have yet to bring forward. The little country has a rough climate, and yields small return to agriculture. For certain kinds of fruit, however, it has always been famous, as a proverb dating from the thirteenth century attests :

> Cadore and Feltre for apples and pears, Serravalle for swords.

The mines and the woods have occupied the chief industry of the people, but the former, except in Auronzo, are extinct ; the latter, unfortunately for the picturesque, are still the subject of a roaring trade. The inhabitants, hardy, isolated, and patriotic, have always maintained much independence of character, which has helped them to support the frequent conflicts which their frontier position and the neighbourhood of the fierce northerns—German and Sclavonic—entailed.

This frontier situation, among other causes, led to the country being full of castles, many of which were not so much feudal as communal. Three especially were under the charge of captains appointed by the ruling Government, whether, as in earlier times, that of the Patriarchs of Aquileia, or, later, that of the Doges of Venice. These three, the keys of the country, were naturally adapted in situation to its shape. At the point of the **V** was its chief and most vital fortress, the castle of Pieve di Cadore, described by L'Anonimo, and with which we shall have most to do. At the north

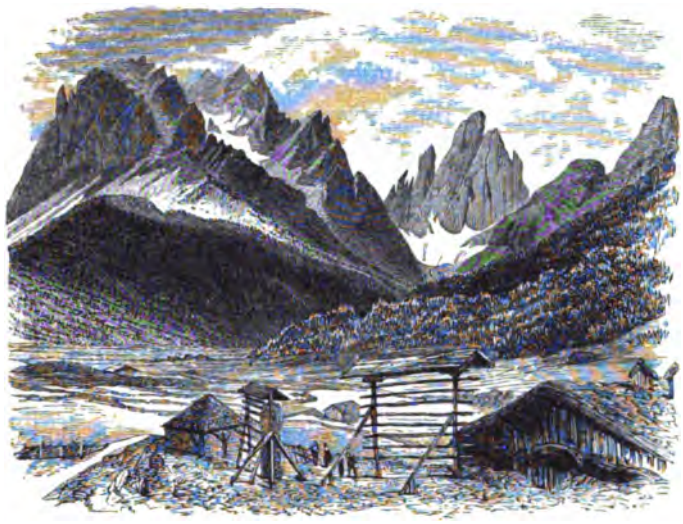
extremity of the Boita valley is Peutelstein, or, in Italian, Bottestagno, of almost as much importance in history, and the fragments of whose towers were seen till very lately crowning the beetling crag which overlooks the whole Ampezzo.* The third castle guarded the passage of the Piave from the north, and from its position, at the junction of the Ansiei with that river, where a singular bridge diverges with triple ways from a rock in the stream, took the name of the 'Tre Ponti.' A few foundations are now the only relics to indicate its site.

It was from this last direction that, four years later than the date of that brief glimpse of Cadore narrated in the previous chapter, we entered once again the country of Titian.† We had never ceased reproaching ourselves for allowing the seductions or tyrannies of voiturier travelling to interfere with a visit to the little town. The scenery had been too striking, the interest of the place too great, to allow it to slip away among the crowd of roadside recollections, and at our English firesides the question had been started, 'What say you to a fortnight at Cadore?' 'Oh, but the inns!' whereupon certain of us testified to a set of

* The Austrians have now destroyed it in constructing a fortress at this point to guard their new frontier.

† The party on this occasion was the same as that whose rambles are related in the 'Dolomite Mountains.' The mournful death of 'A——,' who contributed one of the chapters to that work, soon after put an end to those united journeys.

white window-curtains promising decent quarters at Tai, the village on the high road below. The idea was taking, and so it came to pass that, reversing our former route, one August evening the following summer saw us descending the southern side of the Carnic Alps, in a pair of crazy vehicles, and in space of a few hours exchanging bulbous Teutonic steeples



THE SEXTEN THAL.

for slender campaniles, and the severe Alpine landscape for one hardly less grand, and much more gracious. Perhaps to understand Titian's country as it is, the reader cannot do better than allow me to tell him in this chapter how the project fared.

In the direction we now came, over the Monte Croce pass from Sexten in Tyrol, the outlying district

of Cadore, called Comelico, is reached the moment the summit of the pass is crossed, and its romantic features strike the eye at once. The descent from the grassy saddle, which is now the new Italian frontier, slants downwards by the side of precipices abounding in the stern wall, needle pinnacle, and dark recess peculiar to dolomite, and starting to sight in sudden glimpses on the right, as the road jags through the forest with steep and sudden pitches. Presently it skirts a broad meadow, offering a lovely contrast to the fearsome landscape round. But the meadow is but a short shelf in the swift descent, which now falls into depths, on the edges of which several villages jut into view, perched upon ridges and bluffs, and that would be very picturesque if, after recent conflagrations, they had not been rebuilt in bald ugly style. One of them, Candide, on the verge of the last descent, must detain us a moment, for here is a reputed Titian altarpiece.

At the time I speak of we passed by in ignorance, little dreaming of a Titian in so remote and Alpine a region; nor indeed had I then acquired the pleasant passion for searching out all the nooks and corners among these mountains connected with his name. It was some three years later that I again found myself on this romantic pass, and this time directing my steps to Candide, with a definite purpose, though chastened by many disappointments. 'You have pictures in your church?' said I to a decent inhabitant resting on a wall; a cheerful 'Si' was so far well. 'A picture by

Titian, is there not?' 'Appunto,' exactly—was the prompt reply, and with encouraging alacrity he led the way to the sacristan's, for these churches, unlike those of Tyrol, are almost always locked. A ring at the bell brought a sleepy eyed damsel to the window, and then to the door. 'No, the sacristan was out, gone to the mountain,' and forthwith the door was shut. 'It is a long way to come from England and not to see it,' said I. 'Appunto,' said my friend, and turning the matter over, finger on chin, he knocked again. The door was scantly opened, and adroitly pushing one foot within, he carried on a low discussion, the success of which appeared when the sleepy eyed, shoeless maiden emerged with a ponderous bunch of keys. The church was in better taste than most, and, at a side altar to the left, they pointed out their Titian. Though dim and dingy with neglect and dirt, its quiet colouring and graceful composition gave it a more hopeful look than usual; and, so far as a very brief examination enabled me to form an opinion, I was inclined to accept the identity of the picture with that which, according to the biographers, Titian painted for this church.

Inferior drawing was the most suspicious circumstance: but Titian occasionally fell into this, and was careless with works for village folk, for whose opinion he had no great respect. The Madonna supports the Holy Child, who, standing upon a cushion, holds out a rosary. This entitles the picture, 'the Madonna del Rosario.' Below, is a boy angel with a tambourine.

If a copy, it is by no means a recent one, and is the work of a good hand; and that the design at least is by Titian, the introduction in the background of an evening sky, cut by two mountain forms, is to me strong evidence, so characteristic is its simple poetry.

I was, however, quite as much attracted by two separate figures, the one of the Baptist, the other of our Lord supporting his cross, on the sides of the altar recess. They are sadly damaged, but the latter has all the sober richness of Venetian colouring, and a dignity I would fain say was Titian's own. Anyway, I would commend this little church to the attention of any art-loving wanderer in this secluded region.

The path descends abruptly upon San Stefano, where the road which has taken a wide circuit to get down at all, strikes into that from Sappada and Friuli, which here enters a tremendous gorge. The Piave foams at the bottom, and the mighty precipices of Monte Cornon impend above. The name is connected with an incident in Cadore history. Along the slopes above this gorge, in the war of 1509, a division of Maximilian's troops was cautiously advancing, when the notes of a horn (corno) broke suddenly from the misty mountain side. It was but a casual herdsman, sounding, as is still the custom there at certain seasons, to warn off bears; but supposing themselves about to be attacked by the Cadore people, panic seized the invaders, and they fled the way they came, over the Santa Croce pass to Sexten.

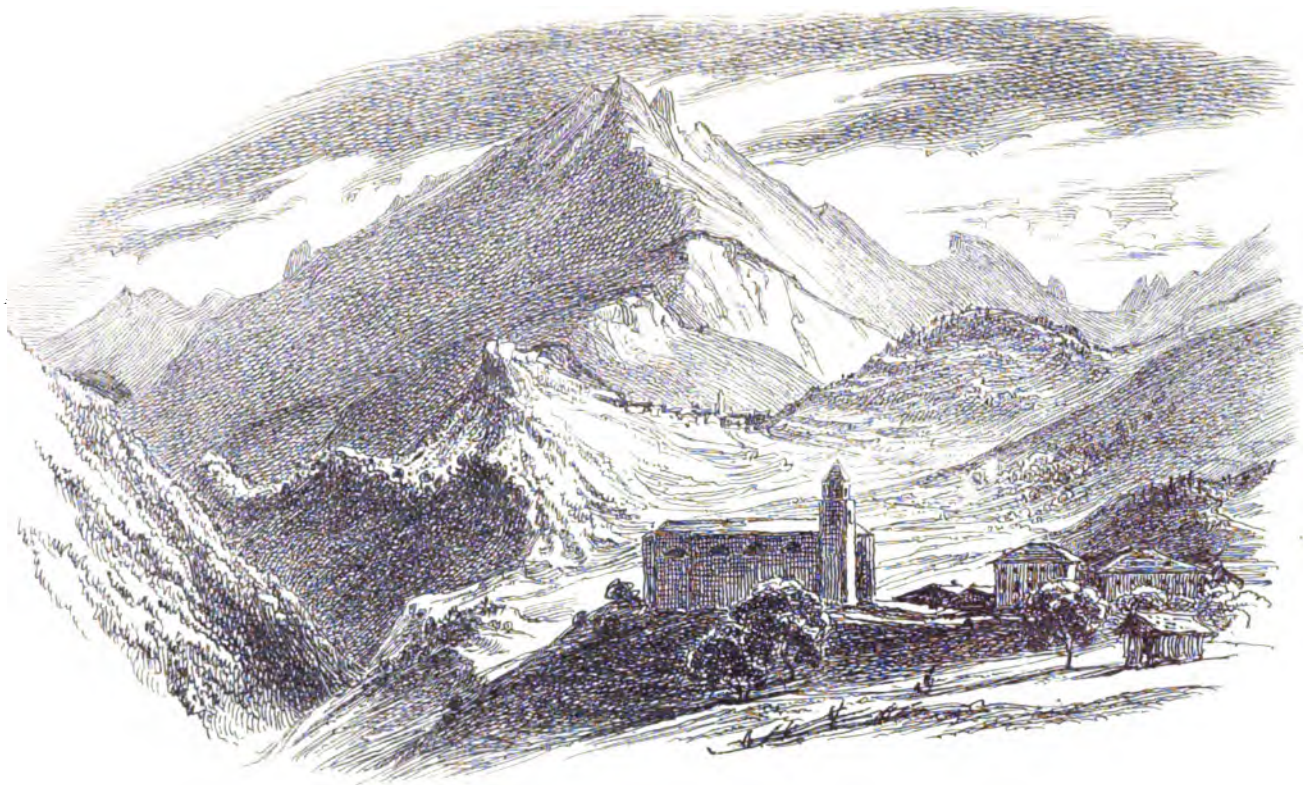
The gorge has been only recently penetrated by the road, offering a more convenient, but frequently a more dangerous, passage than the alp above, since it is continually destroyed by torrent-mud and falling rocks. We threaded it suspiciously, not escaping from its depths till we had rounded Monte Cornon, hitherto shutting off all view southwards, when the broad village-sprinkled vale of Cadore, guarded by noble mountain forms, on either hand suddenly opened before us. At the curious bridge of the Tre Ponti, the Piave is joined by the Ansiei, issuing from the wild, peak-surrounded cul de sac of Auronzo;* and hence flows along the valley in a deep cleft at the foot of its eastern mountains; but the exit of both river and vale appears barred by a commanding bluff, striding into the midst of the landscape, and connected by a narrow saddle with the western hills. Upon this bluff stand the ruins of the castle of Cadore, and upon the saddle rests the town, while the Piave forces its way in

* Of this valley there is a pretty full description in the 'Dolomite Mountains,' p. 382. I am glad to find that our impression of its scenery is amply supported by Mr. Ball in his 'Guide to the Eastern Alps.' He says: 'It is not too much to say, with the images of many other glorious scenes present to his memory, that the writer seeks in vain for any valley offering more exquisite combinations of the grand, the beautiful, and the fantastic, than are here found in favourable weather.' I may add, that since Mr. Ball's work was published, a new and tolerable inn has been opened at the entrance of Villa Piccola. Although part of the territory of Cadore, this valley took little part in its affairs, and I am not aware of any link connecting it with the life or works of Titian. This is, therefore, the only notice I am able to bestow upon it.

unseen depths beneath the foot of the castle rock. This approach from the north strikes the eye at once as much finer than that from the south.

Our road wound up and away from the river, passing through the two large villages of Lozzo and Domegge, the latter, anciently Dumillia, marking where a Roman milestone stood; while the surrounding fields recalled a later historical date, when they were the scene of a combat vital to Cadore, and noted in the Venetian wars. To the left rose Monte Cridola, with jagged dolomitic peaks, but clothed with wood about its base, and bearing on a pine-covered spur the remains of a monastery, destroyed at the time of the Cisalpine Republic. On the right, successive ravines opened glimpses of the frowning Antelao. At one of these, where the torrent is crossed by a lofty bridge, an ancient chapel to the 'Madonna della Molina' hangs over the water on a fragment of cliff. 'Our Lady' here has great power, and her chapel is filled with votive offerings, amongst which, suspended from the ceiling, is the model of a Venetian galley, presented, no doubt, by some native of Cadore, in memory of great straits upon the sea. Soon afterwards the road began, by long and tedious windings, to climb the ridge so long in view, with the little town it bears.

It was gained at last; a poor inn did not disturb our purpose of passing on to Tai. As night was softly falling, we crossed the small piazza, disturbing with the sudden rattle of wheels the groups of people sauntering



Domegge. Cadore in the distance

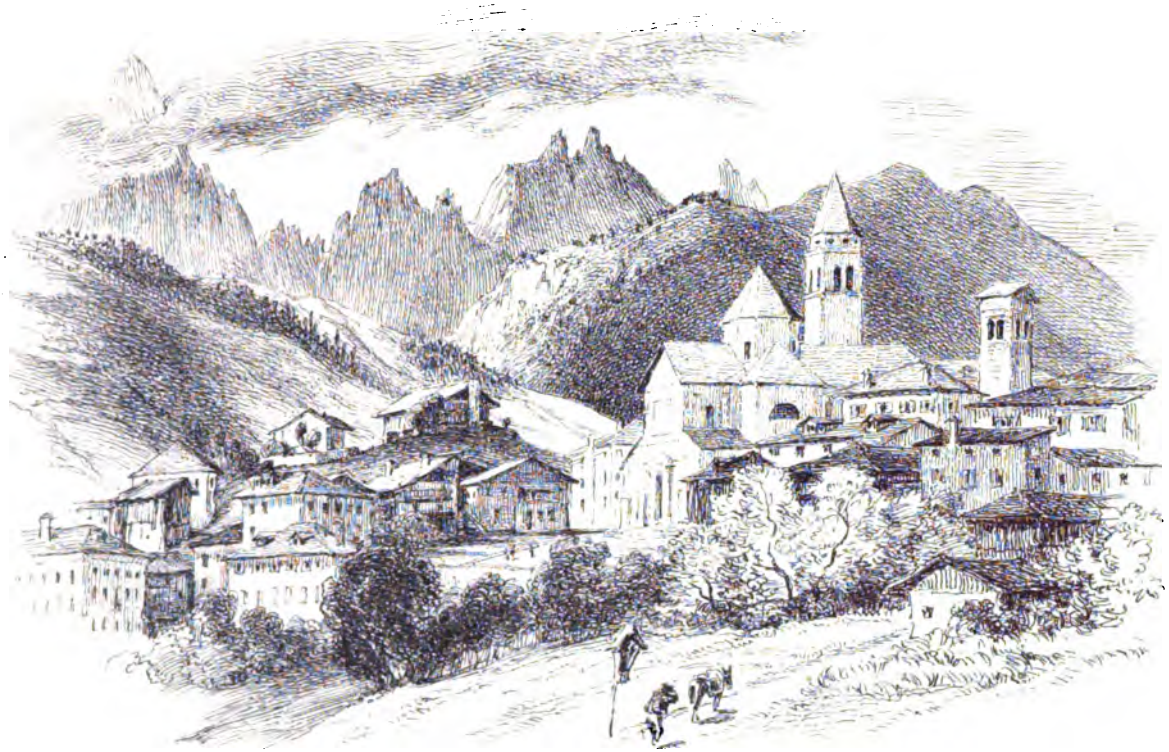
in the open, or lolling on the steps and broken walls, to enjoy the dewy sweetness of the air. In three minutes we were through the little town, and bowling down the southern slope of the ridge that holds it to the 'Strada Allemagna,' where, at the hamlet of Tai, another collection of loungers darkened the inn door. Perhaps it was the dusky light, but somehow the promised curtains looked neither white nor tempting. Our fate was soon decided. A man in shirt sleeves, the padrone, stepped from the throng, shrill calls rang through the house, and accompanied, as usual in such cases, by half the people outside, and all those within, we mounted up dirty stone stairs to the second floor, and defiling between rows of flour sacks, reached two bare rooms. The plaster floors worn and granulated, the huge bed in each, a dingy mass of furniture almost as high as the shoulder, the chairs, rude rush bottoms—struck the eye with dismay. The fortnight scheme dissolved!

But the padrone was lucky in his cameriera. A dwarfish, bright-eyed creature who held that post saw how to propitiate the signori. A tea-table with tall wax lights and snowy cloth soon shone among the flour sacks (the landing-place was the only salle); and with the excellent bread, the fresh butter, the genuine coffee, the fortnight vision took shape again, and in the end was realised.

Now in the bright morning—before breakfast if you

will—let us stroll back to Cadore. Behind it rise the cerulean-tinted peaks of Monte Cornon. On the right the huge bulk of Monte Cridola is dark against the clear east: to the left are steep grassy slopes, hiding as yet the loftier Antelao and Marmarolo in that direction. A modern-looking church, a quaint brown tower, a few large white houses, catch the morning sun. Nearer, and you see that the white walls rise among gardens and foliage; and, nearer still, that the exterior of the church is unfinished; that the western end, especially, is but an unsightly wall, half plaster and half brick, with the bases of columns set where it is to be feared columns never will be, while a marble pilastered doorway leans against the plastered bricks. Above, rises a square box of a tower, with an extinguisher steeple on the top of it. The few windows that pierce the walls are mostly those semicircular orifices that would better suit a market or a railway station. Within, the size and proportions redeem in some degree the want of architectural beauty, several side altar-pieces warm the cold walls, and one of these —a small oblong, curtained up to mark its value, and draw the few sixpences that come this way—claims for itself the glorifying touch of Titian.

It is not a great work in any sense, but it is thoroughly Titianesque—facile in drawing and composition, quiet in colour, and richly toned, though some small portions are unfinished. It is, in fact, under a sacred title, a family group of portraits, thrown together,



Pieve di Cadore and Mte Marmarolo

probably at some leisure time, and this constitutes its chief interest. It is in the chapel of the Vecelli family, dedicated to S. Tiziano, and represents that saint, a handsome man with short dark beard and moustache, kneeling by the side of the Madonna and Child. This is said to be a portrait of Titian's nephew Marco. On the other side bends an old bearded man, St. Andrew—or rather, and notwithstanding a shadowy cross on his shoulder, Titian's brother Francesco—while behind the bishop, filling up a corner, as an acolyte in undemonstrative black, is Titian himself, in the prime of dignified manhood. Some suppose that the Madonna represents the lost wife of Titian, and the whole wears such a domestic air that the suggestion seems a likely one. Under this altar in the original church Titian desired to be buried, and doubtless would have been but for the plague, which, as it prevented his flight to Cadore when living, was no less an obstacle when dead. One other picture almost rivals this in interest, since it purports to be that painted by Titian for the Genova family, when still a student of the Bellini. I see no reason to doubt the statement. The Virgin and Child, the former seated in the open air, and simply a handsome Venetian dame, has S. Rocco on one side and S. Sebastian on the other, both in formal wise exhibiting the memorials of their martyrdom. There is therefore nothing of the easy grouping of the other picture; it is so far imma-

ture; but its glow of colour can hardly be due to any other brush than Titian's.

To appreciate these two pictures, it is only necessary to glance at the other works of art in the church. These are most of them by Cesare Vecellio. A gigantic Last Supper, and two pictures originally painted for the Pretura, or Town House, are in the choir, together with a Martyrdom of St. Catherine, attributed to Orazio Vecelli. Alas for the extinct fire of genius! the Last Supper is the only one creditable in design and drawing; as to colouring, they are all little better than smears from the paint pot. Some figures of saints, painted by Vecellio for an organ screen, but now stowed away in a dark corner, show higher powers of design; and besides these, and some modern works not necessary to enumerate, there is a presumed but nearly invisible Pordenone at a side altar, and in the sacristy a Palma Vecchio. Upon this last, rigid and hard as it is, the eye can yet rest with pleasure. It is a Madonna, with half figures of St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine. The carefulness of execution and solidity of colour show an artist hand; the twilight sky and a line of furrowed, violet hills betray the poetic mind; and, taken in conjunction with the other pictures in the church, an illustration is afforded of the culmination and decay of art. In the elder Palma it is not yet free from bonds; in the early Titian, but partially delivered from them; in his family group, though but a slight specimen of his powers, entirely easy and lifelike; in the

The Vecelli Altarpiece at Cadore

works of the other Vecelli, shrunken into tawdry conventionalities of attitude and colouring.

The church was altered and enlarged in 1808, and has stood unfinished from that date; but, only so late as 1813, the frescoes in the choir, painted by Titian's scholars from his cartoons, were destroyed, though they seem from the descriptions to have been important works.*

We must turn into the piazza for the least morsel of the picturesque, except so far as nature supplies it in the rejoicing hills soaring on every side, and in glimpses of the vale below. In the piazza, go when we will, we shall find women washing at the fountain of 'limpid sweet water,' or sitting among piles of peaches and pears; one or two country carts, a few idlers with cigars in their mouths, several idlers without, and scores of ragged boys. A heavily groined arcade or two conceal what may possibly be shops—more than possibly a café. Not many years ago one of the old houses showed on its front three large figures in fresco, the work of Cesare Vecellio, but the whole place is now smartened up with whitewash. So far the fountain with its groupings, and one or two houses of Venetian date with wonderful knockers, are the only pleasurable objects. Fortunately, a feature rather more remarkable than any yet mentioned, remains to be noticed. On the south side of the piazza

* A minute account of them in MS., with plans of the former construction of the choir, is preserved in the Canonica at Pieve.

is the Pretura, attached to which is the grim brown tower seen from everywhere above the roofs. The building is odd and old, with an external flight of steps to the first floor, where there is one room of decent size, whose ceiling tells of better days. The massive panels are richly carved, and show the date 1590, which was the year succeeding that of a heavy fall of snow, that broke in the roof of the building, and destroyed nearly the whole of its façade. The aspect of the present Pretura, therefore, dates from the repairs occasioned by that disaster, and the rich ceiling shows that these were not undertaken in any spirit of parsimony. The walls of the same chamber were at this time also covered with allegorical paintings on canvas, then quite superseding fresco. These were chiefly the work of Cesare Vecellio, and two of them, representing respectively the Republic and her dependency as two females kneeling in a common homage before the Virgin; and the Madonna and Child surrounded by Religion, Faith, and St. Mark, are among those now preserved in the parish church; for what reason removed I do not know, since their loss leaves only bare unsightly spaces on the walls.

The tower is not lofty, and ends in an open bell chamber, 'where a black bell hangs.' Till lately it was the one grateful feature in Cadore, the one noticeable vestige of an ancient Italian town, and the Cadorini well chose it for their chief memorial of Titian. Upon the side fronting the piazza, the old painter is

depicted in his robes, a figure of colossal size, the bluest of skies behind him, and at his side, upon a gorgeous table-cloth, his palette and brushes. To these he seems pointing with his right hand, unless the gesture refers to the 'Casa Tiziano,' the cottage in which he was born, a few yards off in that direction.

TITIAN'S TOWER.

The picture was presented to the commune some years ago, by an artist employed to paint an altar-piece for the church, and cannot be commended as at all worthy of its subject. I have spoken of the tower as old and brown: it is old, and it is still brown, but not, as upon our first visit. With the execrable taste

of modern Italians, the Cadorini have recently stuccoed it all over, and then painted it in imitation of old stonework, carefully preserving, however, the aforementioned gaudy effigy.

But now let us turn to the left, where a lane descends the hill. It is the old bridle road to Venice, circling round the castle hill to the village of Sotto Castello, and so down by the gorge of the Piave to Perarolo. About the last house out of the town in this lane, and the first, therefore, for Titian as he arrived at the end of his third day's journey from Venice, is the house where he first saw the light. Then, as now, the bright green hill rose abruptly above the roof; but not then, as now, was the inscription to be seen under the eaves, to the effect that, 'within these humble walls, Tiziano Vecelli began his celebrated life.' It is indeed but a cottage, and has recently become an osteria; and as there is nothing to indicate the chamber where he was born, it is pleasanter to look at the place under the open sky, as an object in the landscape whose great features remain as Titian saw them, than to pry into the fusty interior of an artizan's home. In the small open space at the side of the house stands a fountain, where, under the perpetual benediction of a saint, there is a grateful rush of water into an octagonal stone trough. From this open space, called in old time 'Arsenale,' as the site, probably, of an ancient store of arms, a narrow passage leads up directly to the castle.

That this was the identical house of Titian in Cadore has been proved by the same patient enquirer, Cadorin, who discovered his house in Venice. Legal documents in both cases are conclusive. The Vecelli were descended from a Guecello, who, in 1320, came to Cadore as administrator for its then feudal lords the

TITIAN'S HOUSE AT CADORE.

Counts of Camino. They early became an important family, for a Vecelli, or a Palatini, or both together, are sure to appear in the records of any public event. A Conte Vecelli (the 'Conte' apparently a soubriquet, derived from the character or ways of the man), Titian's grandfather, bestowed this house upon his son Gregorio (Titian's father), probably upon his marriage, for the old man lived till long afterwards. Upon

Gregorio's death in 1539, at which time Titian was settled in the Casa Grande at Venice, it passed into possession of his elder brother Francesco, who dying in 1560, Titian himself, then eighty-three years of age, became the owner. Pomponio, his reckless son, who sold everything, sold this with the rest, about four years after his father's death, to a Signor Giovanni Cesco; and the document, dated 1580, gives a minute description of the building, stating it to be part of stone and part of wood. For a brief space, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, it came by marriage again into the hands of a Vecelli, but by failure of male heir passed out again, and was, about the middle of that century, somewhat altered, although the main walls remained intact. A sketch supplied by Cadorin represents the contrary side to that here given, and shows the castle above in the distance, as it existed prior to 1760.

In the academy at Venice there is a sweet grave portrait entitled 'Titian's Mother,' I know not upon what authority, nor have I seen it mentioned by his biographers.* That countenance, approving itself to the wish, comes almost first to the mind in gazing at the little house. It is framed in the doorway; it looks out of the window. To the mother of Titian this was not

* The old woman with a basket of eggs in the 'Presentation of the Virgin,' is also said to be Titian's mother; but there is no evidence of the fact that I am aware of. Still less credence can be given to the suggestion in the catalogue of the Academy, that a very coarse head, attributed to Giorgione, represents her.

always a peaceful abode; three times in her life the castle hard by was besieged; once it was taken by storm, twice surrendered to overwhelming forces, and upon one of these occasions was utterly sacked and burnt. It is to be hoped that, at such times, which happened very near together, Titian's family, instead of hiding in the mountains like many others, were safely sheltered in his house in Venice; and may we not suppose that it was during what was then a protracted visit, that her portrait was painted, and when, such miseries befalling at home, she might well look sad.

The days of Titian's youth, however, were peaceful. To them belongs the pretty story that, at nine or ten years of age, he painted a Madonna upon a wall with the juice of flowers, as if the very colours of such a genius must, in the first instance, have been expressed direct from nature. Be this as it may, I am inclined to think that the origin of the legend may be found in a neighbouring house, one of greater pretensions than that of his birth, but which with another, that formerly stood in an adjoining garden, is believed to have been comprised in the Vecelli property, and was perhaps the residence of the grandfather. At this house, long known as the Casa Sampieri, a courteous application will be courteously met, and they will show you in an upper chamber a fresco, slightly referred to by Ticozzi, but accurately described in the 'Pittura Friulana' of G. di Renaldis (1798) as well as by Ciani, the recent his-

torian of Cadore. It is about 33 inches high by 28 broad, and represents a seated Madonna with the Child, to whom a young lad is kneeling. Much of the drapery and background has been destroyed, but it does not seem to have been tampered with; and there is a certain simplicity in the design and expression of the two sacred figures which commands respect, while the drawing and colouring are crude enough. Tradition claims this as the genuine work of Titian when only eleven years of age, and states that, though now enclosed, the wall upon which it is painted was once the exterior wall of the house. A decision is difficult, since it is impossible to say how much inferior to later productions the works of the greatest of painters at eleven years of age might appear. But there is one point which, as I think, strongly supports tradition. Does not the figure of the kneeling boy—just about eleven as he appears—suggest that the youthful painter, putting in practice the instructions of his first master, Rossi of Zoldo, commended himself in this manner to the Divine care, and left his own portrait upon his ancestral walls, before taking his departure for the great world of Venice? The preservation of the picture against weather is accounted for by the subsequent enclosure; and against war, by the likelihood that these houses, being the nearest to the castle, were, when it was in the hands of the enemy, saved from the general wreck as convenient residences for the higher officers. The variation in age is of little moment; his

Titian's Early Fresco

permanent departure might be a year or two later than the biographers say. Rossi painted altar-pieces in distemper for the parish church of Cadore; for the little church of Nebbiu, about two miles distant; and for Selva in the Val Fiorentina, beyond the Pelmo. Those in Selva are the only ones now extant. When the young Titian with his elder brother Francesco was sent to Venice to enter upon a more thorough art education, he left behind him with his parents, two sisters, Catarina, presently married in Pieve, and Orsola, afterwards his devoted companion.

It was probably some years before Titian saw his native place again. The first suggestion of a visit is the statement of his having painted in 1496, and while still a pupil of the Bellini, that picture of the Virgin in tempera, for the chapel of the Genova family, which is now in the choir of the church. We are told, however, that during the life of his father, he visited his old home every year. This the custom of 'villeggiatura' renders likely. Two Venetian artists at the present day remove their studios every summer to the adjoining cool valley of Ampezzo. But it must be remembered that Titian, after he was his own master, was frequently at a distance from Venice, engaged on important works, and these absences must have rendered his visits irregular; while again, during the years 1508–10, Cadore was the principal scene of the frightful war between Maximilian and the Venetians, when it was much if his paternal cottage was left with its four walls

it. Schaubach, who assigns it to the external wall of the parsonage, speaks of its having been at one time plastered or whitewashed over, and as being now scarcely visible, though this has been removed. I have searched in vain for the authority upon which the story rests. If, however, I failed to find the fresco, I saw—what if Titian saw during his stay in the village would amply reward him for his journey and his work—the whole bulk of the Pelmo, very grandly seen from this mountain-shelf, in one red blaze from the setting sun, while all below was sunk in purple shades, and variously tinted vapours lay wreathed about and behind the illuminated mass. Such spectacles belong to 'mountain glory.'

On the death of his wife in 1530 Titian took his three children to Cadore, and spent a long time there. His father was still living, and his elder brother Francesco, who during the war had entered the Venetian military service, was now residing under the paternal roof, and engaged in mercantile pursuits. It is evident so large a household could not be lodged in the small house at Cadore, and it justifies the statement that the adjoining Casa Sampieri was part of the family property. Titian consoled himself with his art, and at this time painted a picture of St. James and two other saints for the chapel of the Palatini in the parish church, which disappeared after one of the renovations to which the building was subject. At this time, too, he painted the banner to be used for church processions

in Cadore, in which were three children presenting flowers to an enthroned Madonna, a circumstance that cannot but remind us of his own three motherless children then staying with him in his country home. This picture was at one time in the Barnabo Chapel at Domegge, but it now contains only a wretched copy, in which, however, the three children duly appear. To this summer visit are also attributed three other pictures, the one at Candide in Comelico; another, a variation of the same subject, for the village of Vinigo in the opposite direction, close upon the Ampezzo border; and a third for the little village of Vigo, on the slopes of Monte Cornon. It must be confessed that he does not seem to have taken over much pains with these pictures for remote villages.*

When Titian returned to Venice he carried with him, as we know, his sister Orsola, and the household at Cadore was in 1539 still further reduced by the death of his father in that year. The date of his mother's decease is nowhere mentioned, but Francesco now appears as the only resident, while the foreign journeys of his brother became more frequent and more prolonged.

Meantime the fame, influence, and growing wealth of Titian were well understood by his townsmen, and it seems they were in the habit of seeking his good offices. In a suit between Cadore and Belluno, as to the possession of the Tovanella woods near Longarone,

* Excursions to Vinigo and Vigo are described in Chapter VIII.

before the Venetian tribunals, a more exact knowledge of the locality being required, Titian was referred to, who recommended his friend Sansovino to make the necessary survey and plan. He accordingly proceeded to the spot, and was met by a commission from Cadore, a prominent member of which was Titian's cousin, of the same name. As we are at present interested in Cadore it may be satisfactory to know that, after long litigation, our little country gained its cause. But Titian rendered still more substantial services to his countrymen in advancing loans for the supply of corn, which frequent famines and other disasters obliged the community to purchase. Such assistance, it seems, he never refused, though he had sometimes to wait long for his money; and in the strong-room of the church there are with other public records under charge of Signor Cristoforo Vecelli, letters in Titian's handwriting, the phrases curiously interspersed with Latin words and 'patois,' in which he roundly demands his due from 'the most illustrious,' &c.

The year 1539 is supposed to be the date of the picture in the parish church, in which the two brothers appear as elderly but noble-looking men. Francesco died in 1560, and Titian, now sole owner of the little house under the hill, came there great in honour as in years, a Count of the Empire and Knight of the Golden Spur. One of these visits, that of 1565, when he had reached his eighty-eighth year, is distinguished by his exercising a privilege of his rank, in

appointing one of the Vecelli family a public notary. This occurred in the month of October at his own house, and in presence of a large company. It was at the same period that he consented to give the cartoons for the frescoes to ornament the choir of the church, which the following year were executed by his scholars.

More than ten years of life yet remained to him, so that he probably paid still other visits to his native place. He would fain, we know, have taken refuge there from the plague, but that journey was stopped by a public edict, as the journey of life soon after by the irrevocable mandate of death.

Centuries have passed since then, but here still are the four walls that sheltered his childhood, and for nearly a hundred years were familiar to his thoughts. Was it common daylight—cold clear daylight—that then, as now, fell around this spot? Where are the colours that fed the soul of Titian? We may see something of them later. Return hither half-an-hour before sunset, when the green hill of Cadore is all golden, and the sky is flushed with colour, and you will feel more at home in Titian's birthplace. This time, instead of the smooth ascending road from Tai, we will take the wandering footpath that dips into the deep valley with its lush grass, crosses a small brook, hides itself among low bushes, and then climbs suddenly and steeply to the field at the back of Titian's house. Here, on the velvet slope, the boy painter, his fingers stained

mayhap with flower juices, watched the sunsets of four hundred years ago, and saw, as you may see now, those strange, stark shapes, the pyramids, obelisks, and towers of Mte. Marmarolo, shooting into the sky, or piercing the cloud wreaths. They must have made their mark on the boy's observant mind; they must have lived in the old man's memory—shapes, during a hundred or a thousand years the same, in the morning pale and ghostly, in the evening soaring darkly against the glowing west.

Climb the castle hill and you will see more of them. It rises with a double summit and sprinkled with trees, sheltering the humble 'casa' of the great 'Cadorino' from the northern blasts. A few fragments of walls cover the narrow top of one of these. It is just the spot, as you see at a glance, of which the mediæval man was sure to make a place of strength; so conveniently set to command the country up and down, so conveniently difficult of access for those to whom the one practicable path was closed. It is truly the eye, as well as heart, of Cadore; and, instead of being the centre of a ruthless feudal tyranny, like so many of the grey old Tyrol towers, it is pleasant to remember that this especially was the people's great defence, and that it many a time served them well when the 'Tedeschi' were over the border. So long as it was wanted they always readily repaired its breaches and manned its walls.

So late as 1809 it was tolerably intact, approached

Castle of Cadore and Mts. Cridola

by a drawbridge under a portcullis, and through two doors of solid iron. It contained a 'prison and a palace,' in which last the Venetian captain in charge of the garrison lived, and was furnished with a granary, bake-ovens, and a deep well in the living rock. Also there was a secret door, somewhere on the side of the Piave ravine—if secret then, still more secret now—by which the inhabitants of Vigo, a village across the river in that direction, were bound to introduce provisions whenever the castle was in stress of siege, being excused from taxes on that condition. Within the walls was a small church dedicated to St. Catherine, but containing an altar to St. Valentine, to which upon his festival day the people streamed in crowds. It boasted three pictures of note; one attributed to G. Bellini, another by Titian's nephew Marco Vecellio, and a third by Annibale Caracci. A Feltre architect is charged with the destruction of the castle; and, as the date is that of the rebuilding of the parish church, no doubt its stones were then dragged down the hill to assist in rearing that ugly edifice.

The arms of Cadore represent the two towers of the castle with a firtree between them. The view in Cadorin has been already mentioned. More to our purpose is a pen and ink sketch by Titian himself, in a drawing that we must reserve for separate consideration. Sufficient now to say, that it represents a massive round gateway tower, with macchicolated battlements, a length of wall, and a high central square tower. On

our present visit a few foundations and tufts of grass blown by the wind, appeared to be the final phase of its fortunes. Yet it was not so. On the expulsion of the Austrians in 1866 the people again took interest in their national monuments. The ruin was cleared out, the original floor displayed, and a surrounding extent of wall, with here and there an opening, once a window, out of which may be surveyed the dizzy depth below. In course of the excavations some of the huge stone balls were discovered prepared for rolling down on the heads of assailants, the fatal use of which is recorded in the narrative of one of its many sieges. When the people had done all this they finally planted a flagstaff in the midst, which upon all great days flings out to the wind the red, green, and white. But let us now speak of the mountains which make the country itself into a fortress.

This is one of the best points for understanding Cadore. Northward is the pleasant valley of the Piave, shut in by Monte Cornon, and teeming with villages, protected by this castle height from inroad from the south, and defended against more imminent dangers from the north by narrow gorges and mountain passes. Looking southward the ravine of the Piave is seen sinking abruptly towards the misty depths of Perarolo; while away to the right winds the opening of the Boita valley, specked with white villages, one above another. Both valleys here are full of life. Beneath the castle on the west is the town, formerly much larger than at

present, as it has experienced two or three burnings in German raids. Beyond it rises the Marmarolo, but its peaks seen here with their huge subjacent bulk of mountain are less imposing than from Titian's house below. Turning towards the south-west, and following the course of the Boita valley, the eye is caught by a turret lifted in air—a turret, as it might be, of a Babel reaching unto heaven: it belongs to that marvellous piece of dolomite architecture, the Sasso di Pelmo. The rest of it from this point is cut off by the flanks of the Antelao, which, though the kernel of the Cadore mountain system, is still but little seen. To the left of the Pelmo rises a spectral mass, which those who know its surpassing grandeur as seen from the secluded lake of Alleghe, can scarcely believe to be indeed the Civita —a dolomite of nobler proportions, or at least more scenically disposed for effect than any other.* All these exceed 10,000 feet in height. Eastward, across the Piave, are the jagged summits of Mte. Cridola, part of a range extending from north to south, that is here hidden from the spectator by lofty forest-covered hills, but which, from a few points up and down the valley, is seen in startling glimpses, sawing the sky as only dolomite can. The last member of that range southward, near Perarolo, soars into a shape like the snout of a rhinoceros with the horn at the tip; that is Monte Duranno.

* Mr. Walton has painted a fine picture, of large size, of this mountain as seen from the lake.

How much of this scenery influenced the landscape of Titian? Chiefly, I should say, the mountain tops, and some of the near crags. It is too bare, or too little varied in foliage, to supply his woodland, and the mountains are mostly too near to show, as he likes to do, their majestic bases. It seems to have been more the suggestion of startling form that he took from Cadore, though one or two of his most frequently repeated mountain shapes may be detected here. The Pelmo is one. It is well seen from the neighbourhood of Tai; and I may be permitted to say that a comparison of several views of this mountain has led Mr. Ruskin to suppose that it supplied the type most frequently in Titian's mind, and was perhaps the original of that strange object (pl. xx.). But the Marmarolo, so remarkable in clear weather from his house, must have been a ruling influence; and the people of Cadore not only claim it as Titian's mountain, but as the original of that introduced in the background of the Presentation of the Virgin (fig. 7). It has been already suggested, that the very similar mountain in the Adoration of the Magi at Belluno, is the Marmarolo as first seen soon after leaving that city. The great horn, or pyramid, shown on the extreme left in the view of Cadore (pl. xv.), and again in that of the castle and Mte. Marmarolo (pl. xxix.), seems to have chiefly impressed him; for a similar form continually occurs, as in fig. 17, from an etching by Lefevre; and in one of the frescoes in the Scuola del Santo at Padua.

Fig 16. (Antelao?)
from a Titian Drawing

Fig: 17
Titian? Etched by Lefevre

Fig 18. from a Drawing of the Baptism

The same too is, I believe, intended at fig. 18, from a drawing of the Baptism of Christ, belonging to W. R. Drake, Esq., and additionally interesting, because the little town beneath it is almost certainly Cadore with the old mule road leading up to it. Mte. Duranno, seen best from the road to Valle (pl. xxv.), may have also had its share; and the Cridola (pl. xviii.), as mentioned in the last chapter, is probably the mountain seen through the window in the Supper at Emmaus. Of the Antelao, as it appears so suddenly and strikingly at Perarolo, I am much inclined to believe fig. 16 is a reminiscence.'

But the most interesting connection of Titian's pencil with Cadore landscape remains to be noticed. About a mile from the town, along the Ampezzo road, a small sloping plain is entered, bright in these days with crops of Indian corn and buckwheat. Beyond it rises, on a narrow promontory, the village of Valle, by far the most picturesque point in Cadore scenery, as, after the castle, the most important in its story. A little further, following a mule track leading towards the Boita, is found, sunk in the gorge, a narrow bridge of a single arch, spanning the depth of dizzy water at a height of nearly 200 feet. It is seen for a moment from a turn in the road towards Venas, but is otherwise quite out of sight of the ordinary traveller.* Now among these fields of Valle was fought, and in

* The frontispiece gives this point of view.

Titian's lifetime, the Battle of Cadore, of momentous importance in the relations between the Emperor Maximilian and the Venetian Republic; and the subject, as I trust to show, though long disputed, of Titian's great battlepiece, in which, moreover, the Boita bridge rules the whole composition. It serves for the humble traffic of some poor hamlets across the torrent, and few remember that it once served an army. But before we come to this bridge again I must ask the reader's attention to a sketch of the History of Cadore before its destinies culminated in a great disaster.

The Pelmo? From a Titian Drawing etched by Lefevre

CHAPTER V.

CADORE AS IT WAS.

The interest of the story—Aborigines and the Roman era—The barbarian invasions—The Lombards—Social condition—Charlemagne and the Franks—Anarchy—Otho—Rise of popular liberties—Relations with Aquileia—The Counts of Camino—Virtual independence of Cadore—Prosperity—Patriarchal protectorate—The Vecelli—Allegiance transferred to Venice—The Venetian captains—Events of Titian's youth—Approaching troubles.

THOUGH it may be needful to tell the story, I must acknowledge an anxiety as to the interest of a chapter that must be full of strange names and remote dates, and in which the personages must appear and disappear in rapid succession, the means and the opportunity alike wanting for clothing them with a living individuality. In such a narrative, through much of its course, century after century passes like a cloud shape; no voice reaches us, and the unsubstantial forms mingle and dissolve confusedly. This is the difficulty of early eras.

On the other hand, the limitation of the scene to a single valley, concentrates and defines what interest there may be, as there must be some, in the fortunes of such a little community as we are concerned with. The smoke of the hearth was going up, and the sounds of labour were echoing among those hills for ages; and it

is something to learn how the common course of life ran on so long in that secluded corner—something to know how they shaped themselves into a commonwealth, and held their own among their neighbours. Nor were they so much secluded but that they were hard by great marts and fields of fame, and within sound of some of the great tumults and catastrophes of the world; and we may well be curious to know what of all this reached them there in their mountain nook? —how matters which make a noise through all time struck upon their ears?—what glimpses they might get of things that make the pomp of history? And indeed much did reach them, and their fortunes sometimes rose into epochs big with destinies greater than their own. Above all, it is needful to know what sort of people they were that produced a Titian; what sort of story was familiar to his mind as a 'man of Cadore;' what sort of whirlwind of war it was that brought about in his own lifetime, and among his native fields, that 'Battle of Cadore,' which he himself contributed to make famous.

'Men of Cadore' was a phrase long proudly used. It spoke of a certain independence; it reminded the people affectionately of their mountain retreat. What, however, were the first 'men of Cadore,' who shall say? That they were not 'lake dwellers' is certain, since there was no lake in the country; and it is probable high mountain districts were never settled except under some compulsion, and subsequently therefore to

plains and valleys. The earliest name attached to these mountain parts is that of the 'Taurisci;'* but the sole relic of their existence appears to be two vocables: *Taur*, applied at this day to the highest ridges or passes; and *Baite*, by which the Cadore people still call the rude huts or sheds on the mountains, in which the shepherds shelter at night, lighting a fire at the entrance. No better than these probably were the homes of the Tauriscian mountaineers.

These people becoming mixed with, or else expelled by, refugees from the plains, the Tauriscian name was merged in that of Rhætian, and (so says our local historian), one of the Rhætian tribes—the Caturigi—settling at the foot of the Antelao, there built upon a jutting hill a fortress called Caturigia—whence the name 'Cadore.' However that may be, these mountain tribes, fiercely independent in their separate valleys, owned no central authority. They traded with the people of the plains in wax, honey, skins, resin, pitch and cheese; and were very ready, like the Swiss of later times, to let themselves out for hire as fighting men to whomsoever needed such sinews of war.

One foresees the fate of such clannish insubordinate hill folk, as the Roman power began to overshadow Italy. It is indeed under the flash of the Roman sword that they first become visible to us. Entering probably by the Val Sugana, the Romans subjected

* 'Juxtaque Carnos Taurisci.' Pliny, lib. iii. cap. xxiv.

Feltre and Belluno, both already Rhætian cities, and to curb the neighbouring tribes—our Cadorians to wit—they garrisoned a post on the Piave, now called Lavazzo. This, with other forts, was, during the distractions preceding the establishment of the empire, destroyed by the insurgent Rhætians, who ravaged also the plains of Cisalpine Gaul below. Then came their fate. Drusus and Tiberius, despatched by Augustus, closed in upon their fastnesses, the one from Trent, the other from Venetia, and they were finally subdued.

Another mixture of population followed this conquest. For, while a large portion of the inhabitants were removed to the plains, and a probably Sclavonic people from Carnia introduced to fill their place, the Roman soldiers were settled in the country as military colonists, a certain amount of land being assigned to each band of one hundred men, out of which arose the term 'centurie,' applied to the communes in Cadore. Eventually the rights of Roman citizenship were granted, and Roman municipal institutions introduced, of which the 'Curia Cadorina,' found in documents subsequent to the tenth century, remained a relic.

Presently Cadore derived real importance from the Roman road cut through it, and which, starting from Altinum on the Adriatic, and following the course of the Piave, crossed the mountains into Noricum. Stations upon this road in the Cadore valley are traced not only by the coins discovered, but by the Latin derivation of some dozen village names, of which perhaps the

Chapel of La Molina

most curious is Domegge, formerly Dumillia, from a column or milestone marked 'duo millia,' and exactly that distance from the little chapel of the Molina (the name of the stream), where there are traces of one of the principai post stations (*mansiones*).

But if the Cadore people reaped advantages from Roman civilization, they suffered fearfully from its decay and ruin. The wreck of every barbarian invasion drifted into such valleys as theirs, bringing rapine and disorder. Under Constantine, these mountains were first definitely included in Venetia, with the centre of government at Aquileia, a name of great moment to all these Adriatic regions, both in its greatness, in its fall, and afterwards as the seat of a patriarchate. Each century, however, now brought its horror of invasion, and sometimes more than one. In the fifth, the Visigoths under Alaric, repulsed from Aquileia, ravaged the Alpine districts; and not long afterwards appeared the Huns, under the more terrible Attila, and that siege of Aquileia began so famous in history. During this siege, so long in doubt, bands of Huns spread everywhere, and penetrating Cadore, burnt Agonia, then its principal town, situated at the 'Tre Ponti,' on the tongue of land between the streams, and of which Cesare Vecellio remembered seeing the ruins, though no trace of them now remains. There are still, however, vestiges on the hills near Perarolo of dwellings said to have been erected for shelter of the inhabitants while the 'Scourge of God' was in their neighbourhood. Then

came Odoacer, one of whose followers took possession of Cadore; and then Theodoric with his Ostrogoths, who divided the lands among his captains, but left untouched the native administration; and then the Franks, who, about 530 A.D., passed up the Pusterthal, and pouring southward through Cadore, penetrated as far as Ceneda. These last held Cadore for about twenty-six years; and then Narses, who by that time had conquered all Italy, brought Cadore also within the limits of the Greek empire.

All these were but fleeting changes—storms that left only wreck behind. Now at last came one, out of which emerged something like order, and a designation which North Italy is still proud to retain. Alboin, at the head of his Longobards, crossed into Italy in 568 by the pass of the Predil, not far from the eastern border of Cadore. A singular hill still bears the name of the King's Mountain, (Königsberg), because the Lombard leader stood upon its summit to direct or watch the passage of his army. Upon completing his conquest he declared Friuli a duchy, placing it under the rule of his nephew Gisulpho; and he, some seven or eight years afterwards, entered Cadore, apparently overlooked till then, and compelled its submission to Lombard rule and feudalism. Under this system the land was divided into two parts, one portion set apart for the sovereign and his successors, and the other divided among his retainers, known as Arimanni, a term which lasted for many ages in Cadore. In this

manner, and also as already in ecclesiastical connection with Aquileia, whose patriarch was still allowed a certain jurisdiction, and to levy an annual tithe, Cadore became geographically attached to Friuli, a relation which did not cease till quite recent times. Out of the royal portion of the land, Desiderius afterwards made large gifts to the monastery of Innichen in the Pusterthal; and a curious vestige of Lombard rule is found in the term 'sacco,' by which this royal portion was designated, and which belongs at this day to certain lands, villages, and families in Cadore.

Having now passed over, with what speed we might, that dismal period when the trumpets of woe were sounding ever and again over the destruction of Roman civilization, and arrived at brighter times, we may look back a little and ask to what sort of social and religious condition our little country had attained. Christianity is said to have first reached the valley through the Roman garrisons; and, in 330 A.D., Cadore was attached by Constantine to the diocese of Aquileia. But to the invasion of the Franks, who carried their priests with them, is attributed the first profession of Christianity by baptism of any considerable portion of the population; and the first church in Cadore, that of St. Peter and St. Paul, was built at Pieve* during their twenty-six years of occupation. This was the only church in the country, till, about 600 A.D., on

* Pieve is derived from *plebs*, and denotes the place where the *people* of a district were first settled, or held their first assemblies.

account of the difficulty of resorting to it in winter, a second church was built in Comelico, and dedicated to St. Stephen, then held in great honour from the recent discovery of his bones, and the miracles attributed to them wherever any fragment was transported. The clergy attached to these churches were generally natives. They opened schools upon which the people depended for education, and as representatives and defenders of popular rights, as well as of the popular religion, were of the greatest service during the successive invasions, and even contrived to maintain an independent position alongside the Lombard institutions. At last the Lombards themselves, under the gracious influence of Queen Theodelinda, became Christians, and then churches and houses of refuge for pilgrims sprung up in all the mountain districts. One particular relic of Lombard Catholicism is the dedication of any church, altar, or rural oratory, to St. Michael, that great military angel having been adopted by the warlike tribe as the most fit successor to their own original war-god. The shrines of St. Michael in Cadore are numerous; and the mighty angel, who stands with outstretched pinions on the summit of the campanile at Belluno, claims all that valley for the Lombards.

The trade in timber very early established itself in Cadore, and already at the time of the Lombard invasion there were families of wealth and importance, for one of them fled at that date to Torcello, occasioning

the first mention of Cadore in Venetian annals. The position of those that remained was hard. The native Cadorini were deprived of all part in public business, and, excepting those who had entered the Church, were reduced to serfdom as labourers in the fields and woods, or shepherds on the mountains. Military service belonged only to Lombards, and at first all the land, but as a third of this became eventually Church property, it was restored in a manner to native hands again. Many Lombard words retained in the dialect and in songs—if, indeed, the songs are still sung—attest the days of Lombard predominance.

In 611 horrible rumours of war and rapine assailed Cadore from two quarters at once. The Avars, a ferocious Asiatic horde of unknown origin, burst in upon Friuli, slew Gisulpho, and for a time overthrew the Lombard power in those parts. And then, while the Avars were ravaging on their eastern border, the Sclaves made an inroad into the Pusterthal, on their northern confines, where they sacked and burnt Aguntium, that once Roman city, which was then an outpost of the Bavarian dominions in Tyrol. It is rather startling to read of a Garibaldi, son of the Bavarian Duke, attacking and driving back the invaders.

In Charlemagne, declared King of Lombardy in 774, we meet with another great landmark of history. Friuli, to which he had penetrated through the Noric Alps, was one of his conquests: it then included both

Carniola and Carinthia, and abolishing the Lombard institutions, he divided the whole duchy, deriving its title from the last-named province, into countships. Cadore was one of them, and the first count, a Frank, supported by Frank soldiers, exercised intolerable tyranny, which soon caused an emigration to that common refuge in those evil days—sea-sheltered Venice. Two of the Cadore families, who fled at this time, achieved distinction in Venetian affairs; and one, the Armeri, flourished as patricians for 700 years after their expatriation. Yet this period of Frankish oppression had one good result in the fusion it caused between the two hitherto hostile races of Lombards and native Cadorini, who, sharers in misfortune, were thenceforth Italian without distinction; while at the same time several of the communes contrived to shake off the feudal yoke. One of these was that of Folcegno, a village on the hill side across the Piave, which from some Alpine disaster no longer exists. It was originally a Lombard colony, which may account for its early independence; and the name of the neighbouring mountain, Talagona, is said to bear witness to their original worship of Thor; while the bronze bell of their little church, which perished by fire at Domegge only in 1806, having been removed there in the fourteenth century, showed by a rude relievo that, as usual with Lombards, Thor had been superseded by St. Michael. Domegge itself, which had lain waste since the days of its old Roman name, Dumillia, now

became a flourishing community, with a castle, and an oratory built in 809, and afterwards enlarged into the parish church.

And so, out of the dim ages, begins to appear the present shape of things in the little country. It is by details such as these, limited to a small neighbourhood, that the great changes of history are illuminated, and it is our only excuse for dwelling upon them.

The dissolution of the Frank Empire upon the death of Charlemagne brings us to one of those quagmires, across which it is a hopeless task to drag the ordinary reader. It is a slough of despond stretching through centuries. We can only pick out a few of the more noted names, and keep the thread of our local story closely in hand. Berengarius, at first Duke of Friuli, and in that way of some consequence, whether for good or for evil, to Cadore, is one of the tolerably familiar names. He became for a time, and two or three times over, King of Italy; but we are chiefly concerned with him on account of his tremendous defeat by the Hungarians on the Brenta, the noise of which at least must have rolled up the defiles to the men of Cadore, who, during the two succeeding years that the fierce invaders devastated Upper Italy, were doubtless in constant peril. A few years later however, in 913, danger menaced them as well from the north as the south. The Hungarians penetrated into Tyrol by the valley of the Inn, where at last they were defeated by Arnolfo of Bavaria; and this incur-

sion seems to have roused the Cadorini to vigorous measures, which proved for them, as for several of their Italian neighbours, the commencement of popular liberties. Everywhere the people finding their princes unable to protect them, took to fortifying themselves, and Cadore at this time raised most of the castles, the ruins, or the memory, of which yet remain in the country. With especial reference to the peril from Tyrol, the people raised a wall across the pass of Misurina, and planted upon the crag at the head of the Ampezzo valley the towers of Bottestagno (Peutelstein), commanding what was then the only track, and suspended over the dull roar of a cataract in the depths below.

Berengarius was assassinated in 924, having in the previous year made a deed of gift to the Bishop of Belluno, which is the earliest document in which Cadubrio (Cadore) appears.

Hugo of Provence next appears on the scene, and with him is connected a curious circumstance in the history of Cadore. To protect his Italian kingdom he established garrisons of Saracenic mercenaries among the mountains; and the memory of one of these is preserved, it is said, in 'Mauria,' the pass so named leading from Cadore to the valley of the Tagliamento; as 'Arsenale'—the very spot where Titian was born—marks the depôt of their arms in Pieve.

A more portentous figure than either of the preceding is that of the Emperor Otho the Great, who, in

Castle of Pentelstein
or Bottestagno

prosecution of his Imperial claims, led the way in that German interference with the affairs of Italy which has proved so disastrous to both countries. Before taking formal possession of the fair southern land, he separated from it all that portion lying between the Adige and the Julian Alps, which, with the title of the March of Verona, he (in 952) consigned to Arrigo, Duke of Bavaria. In this 'March' Cadore was included; but while the vigour of Arrigo delivered them from the ever present terror of the Hungarians, his oppressions, and the crowd of foreigners to whom he opened the country, left the poor Cadorini little to be thankful for. The German names found in Cadore are derived from this period. The son of Otho, during his short reign, by a grant of lands in Cadore to the Abbey of Innichen, raised a subject of heartburning and contention, which lasted till the middle of the seventeenth century. Nor was this the only grievance arising out of ecclesiastical claims. The bishops of those days were much given to 'wars and fightings' for the sake of enlarging their dioceses, or rather their revenues, to which each chapelry or parish brought its tribute. The Bishop of Belluno, at this period, attempted by violence to annex Cadore, but succeeded only in acquiring a small mountain chapelry.

A pleasanter feature of the times is the erection of houses of refuge for the pilgrims, who were always crossing the mountains to or from Italy. The Ospitale near Peutelstein, and the Ospitale near Longarone, the

two extremities of Cadore, are so named from the religious foundations dating from this tenth century.

Nor were pilgrims the only travellers; for Cadore timber was now floated in rafts down to the gates of Venice, corn and wine were brought up on pack-horses, and merchants were passing to and fro. Many families were thus enriched, and the commercial, preparing the way for the political connexion, strengthened also the rising liberties of Cadore. These again were forwarded by the persuasion of the times, that the completion of the thousandth year of the Christian era would bring the predicted end of all things. Everywhere the awful expectation seems to have quelled for a while the rapacious tyrannies of dukes and counts; and it is certain that the Cadore Count at this period yielded easily to an arrangement by which the people were left free to manage their own affairs, certain dues upon merchandise, and proceeds from the mines, being reserved for him on the chance of the world lasting. The eleventh century saw these privileges so consolidated, that Cadore became virtually an independent Republic, under very slight relations with its count. Its affairs were administered by a council, whose members were elected or confirmed in their seats annually, two being sent from each of the ten 'centurie.' This sat in Pieve, and though the count nominally retained the adjudication of civil cases, and the punishment of criminals, the decisions were really those of a legal officer appointed by the council.

But, in the twelfth century, an important political change took place. It will have been noticed how frequently the name of Aquileia, that now well-nigh forgotten city, occurs in our history. If remembered at all it is for its terrible destruction by Attila. But a city dating from 181 B.C., which had been the residence of Cæsar—where Vespasian was proclaimed Emperor —which alone, besides Rome in Italy, was allowed a mint—which bore indeed the proud title of the second Rome—such a city would not die. It was rebuilt by Narses, but, like Rome itself, it was an ecclesiastical that succeeded to a secular importance, and kept it still in the eye of the world. The Aquileian church, claiming to have been founded by St. Mark at the time when he wrote his gospel, possessed one of the most ancient creeds, and supplied to Christendom the clause, 'He descended into hell.' The Aquileian church, in 553 A. D., raised a great schism, and held its own against the papacy for nigh 150 years. The Aquileian church elevated its bishop into a Patriarch, that strange sounding title for a Western ecclesiastic, but suitable to the antiquity and former greatness of the city, and to the Oriental associations of the Adriatic. The Patriarch owned the allegiance of three metropolitans, but as he was the creation of a schismatic church, his patriarchate does not appear among the five accepted orthodox seats of this ancient dignity—Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem. But his title was acknowledged,

nevertheless, in the secular world; for, like the Pope, he became a secular prince. Early in the eleventh century, Conrad II. invested the Patriarch with the duchy of Friuli and the marquisate of Istria; and as Aquileia on the borders of the lagune, silting up and unhealthy, was no longer tenable, the seat of government was removed to Udine. Yet the title, drawn from the proud old city, remained, and its owner became a formidable power. The Counts of Cadore had long been feudally attached to the rulers of Friuli, and thus the Patriarchs, assuming their place, came to hold a double relation, ecclesiastical and civil, to the country.

This latter tie was, however, very slight, till, in the twelfth century, the time we speak of, it happened that one of the Patriarchs held for himself, with certain lands, the countship of Cadore. Yet the connexion at that date was but temporary, for, on departing to the Holy Land, he bequeathed all his rights in that neighbourhood to a nephew, the Count of Camino, head of a powerful Lombard family, to whom, as mentioned in a previous chapter, Ceneda, Serravalle, and all that charming sub-Alpine country belonged. Cadore now, therefore, became Caminese territory, and with this transfer opened a new and troubled era, for its fortunes were linked with those of a scheming, ambitious, fighting family. Yet the Cadorini retained so far the management of their affairs, that, in the squabbles between the Counts and their neighbours, their aid was sought rather as a favour than claimed as a right.

Some of these feuds arose from the propensity of widows and heiresses to make over property to clerical friends, which the male relatives of the ladies did their best to recover; and when the quarrel lay with the Bishop of Belluno, the Cadorini were always ready enough to help with their blades the Lords of Camino.

To Gabriele, the third of this house, are attributed the walls surrounding Serravalle, the fragments of which still attract the traveller's eye as he approaches that little nest of a town from the plain; and to him, a wise and able ruler, Cadore was indebted for the appointment of a podestà of eminent qualities, and reforms in the administration of justice. The Count, as head of the Guelf party in those districts, took an active part in the strife between the adherents of Pope and Emperor which then convulsed Italy, and in the course of a few years resigned Cadore to a nephew, Biaquino, also a strong Guelf partisan.

It was in a son of this Count of Cadore—Gerardo, appointed captain-general of the Guelfs for this part of Italy—that the House of Camino reached its greatest splendour. He seems, indeed, to have been good as well as great; and there happened to him greater honour than he ever knew, for his name was recorded by Dante, who during his exile, and in the extreme age of the Count, was much in this neighbourhood, as 'that good Gerardo,' and one of 'three aged ones in whom the old time chides the new.' Both in the 'Convito' (p. 143) and the 'Purgatorio' (canto 16) he is

commended—a fact the more remarkable, since Dante then belonged to the opposite party. Cadore may be proud that the name of one of her rulers should be thus enrolled, and not less so if, as seems probable, the famous traveller Polo drew the courage and prudence that led him to Cathay from the Cadore mountains. A family of that name emigrated to Venice from Comelico early in the thirteenth century, and became patrician there, but further evidence is wanting. Under Gerardo, who died in 1306, the statutes of Cadore were revised, and arranged in three volumes, setting forth the privileges of the Count, the rules of trade, and everything necessary to the administration of its affairs.

So far Cadore seems to have fared pretty well at the hands of the Caminesi. Yet, as time went on, the never-ceasing feuds between the Counts and the Patriarchs of Aquileia—who, as partisans of the Emperor, or as inheriting the old historical enmity of the Aquileian Church to the Popes, or more frequently disputing upon questions of mere territorial pelf, were always their antagonists—drew Cadore, as a border country and a fief of the Counts, into many an unhappy contest, which, secluded as it was, might otherwise have been avoided.

Yet, as the valley formed one of the high roads into Germany, it was scarcely so secluded as it looked, and the traffic occasionally brought troubles of its own. A Count of Camino, less pious or prudent

than his predecessors, was the cause of much mischief by the pillage of some Viennese merchants on their journey. The outrage was resented upon the country, and it resulted eventually in his own murder in his palace in Serravalle by a hired assassin, who contrived to get behind him on pretence of watching a game of chess.

Thus it was in the midst of confused and interminable struggles in which the Counts were engaged—now with the Duke of Austria, now the Count of Gorizia, now the Patriarch, now the Scaliger of Verona, now the Bishop of Belluno—that the fourteenth century opened for Cadore. But we turn aside from it all to note that, in 1320, a podestà of Pieve, Guecello di Tomaso da Pozzale, founded the family there, afterwards known as the world-famous Vecelli. It was at this period too, troubled as it was, that a public school was established, whence the youths destined for law or medicine were drafted off to Padua, or other cities of the Marches, for completion of their education; while those intended for clerics were, after examination by the Bishop or Patriarch, received into Holy Orders in the church of Pieve, now the seat of an archdeaconry. With this school several members of the Vecelli family, who were early distinguished for learning, were at different times connected. And, as illustrating the growing desire for education, the story may be told of a lad, the son of a poor woodcutter of Vallesella, near Domegge, who, accompanying his father on one of the rafts to

Treviso, was there observed to stand for hours at the doors of a school, listening to the instructions of the master. At last invited in, the master was so struck with the boy's avidity for learning that he undertook his gratuitous education. He became a priest, and rose to the dignities of canon of Treviso and of Trent, but visited every year his aged parents in his native

MONTE CIVITA, FROM CAPRILE.

village, where he eventually built a church and priest's house, endowing the benefice with sufficient funds.

Mining had at this time become a flourishing branch of industry. The people of Caprile, on the extreme western border of the country, where long afterwards the lovely lake of Alleghe was formed by a mountain slip, were particularly successful, and so enterprising

that they even obtained leave of the Patriarch to open mines at Sappada, on the opposite side of the Cadore territory. That mountain slip was a local disaster having several earlier parallels; but in January, 1348, occurred the fearful earthquake, tokens of which are still apparent throughout the Eastern Alps. In Cadore it threw down the towers of Peutelstein on their rocky perch, destroyed a village with all its inhabitants on the side of the Antelao, and did much other damage. It was followed by pestilence, and that, in the month of April, by a strange phenomenon described as a rain of blood, which destroyed for two years all the crops, and reduced the inhabitants to famine. To these calamities were added political troubles accompanying the downfall of the house of Camino.

Rizzardo, the last of those notable Counts, died in 1335, ending a rule in Cadore of 180 years. He left orphan children, whose rights the Cadorini, with more fidelity than prudence, undertook to defend. In the dangerous task they suffered the first of those terrible German invasions which were to work such woe to the country: a certain Engelmann took possession of their castles in the name of the Count of Tyrol, recently become so by marriage with the redoubtable Margaret Maultasch ('mouth-poke'). Help came from the Patriarch Bertrand, a man of great ability and virtue, and who, as ruler of Friuli, still claimed jurisdiction in Cadore. Savorgnano, one of his captains, entered the country, Engelmann retreating into Tyrol at his ap-

proach. Several hundred Cadorini joined him, and the three important passes into Tyrol—the Ampezzo, the Misurina, and Monte Croce (leading to Sexten)—were well manned against a German army advancing up the Pusterthal. Savorgnano himself lay in front of Peutelstein, and there, near to Landro on the present Ampezzo road, where the forlorn Durren See reflects

MONTE CRISTALLO AND THE DURREN SEE NEAR LANDRO.

in its shallow waters the pinnacles and glaciers of Monte Cristallo, the Cadorini fought their first recorded battle in defence of their country. The mountaineers took advantage of their ground; stones and darts, hurled from the heights, assisted the trained soldiers of Savorgnano, and completed a discomfiture such as an invading army has many a time experienced in mountain defiles.

This victory had the solid political result of placing Cadore under the direct rule of the Patriarch, who followed it up by a stately and memorable visit to Pieve, the only instance of a great prince showing his face to the remote mountain community. It was a grand occasion, welcomed with immense rejoicing; but the prudent elders made use of it also to establish the rights of the country in a formal compact, defining their relations with the governing power, and opening with the significant phrase, 'The Cadorini free now as ever.' A stipulation that a military captain should in future be granted them to reside in the castle of Pieve, and assist in the defence of the country, appears for the first time, and indicates a new sense of danger from invasion, and different relations with the sovereign power. Their feudal lord was no longer close at hand with watch and ward at Serravalle, nor had he the same direct interest in the land as formerly. The Patriarch did not forget his spiritual capacity, and looked into church matters during his visit. Hitherto the sacraments had been administered solely in the church of Pieve, and only twice a year; now San Vito and other churches were permitted to celebrate these rites, and the people were spared the often difficult journey from remote Alpine villages in all weathers. This, the best of the patriarchal rulers in Cadore, perished by assassination when ninety years of age.

The Patriarchs like the Counts of Camino were, as

we have intimated, constantly at war with their neighbours, and as constantly the Cadorini suffered in the fray. This was especially the case when Venice happened to be the adversary, for then the lucrative passage of merchandise from Germany through Cadore was stopped. The worst contingency, however, was when the succession to the patriarchate was disputed, and Cadore might chance to take the wrong side. Upon one such occasion, the country actually fell under the excommunication of the Pope. Yet it survived the misfortune, and the end of the century saw the brave mountaineers still consolidating their liberties, and regulating their affairs. Several communes—such as Valle and Domegge—put their laws into writing—or perhaps only took copies of the common statutes; others obtained the privilege of the sacraments, and all combined to fix a scale of fees to check the rapacity of the priests, no longer guardians, but spoilers of the people. Nor must we forget to mention that a Cristoforo Vecellio obtained from the Patriarch exclusive rights in cutting wood, and the fief of two mountains wherein to excavate for silver and other metals. It is evident the family was already taking a prominent position in Cadore.

The fifteenth century opened in peace for the patriarchate, and, to secure its continuance, the people of Friuli, Cividale, and Cadore formed a league for mutual defence; the chief danger on the horizon being the ambition of Visconti of Milan, now aiming at the

subjugation of all North Italy. Yet the first peril arose from Germany; for the Emperor Sigismund, refused a passage to Rome by the Venetians, entered Friuli with 11,000 Hungarians, and Cadore, so unluckily situated on the frontier, and ill-protected on that side by the easy pass of Mauria, had to submit to him for a time. That, however, only exposed them to an immediate attack from his opponent, the Duke of Austria, in Tyrol, considered apparently a worse foe by the Cadorini, for the northern passes were at once strongly guarded, and again a Vecellio appears in the history. This time he is noted as taking charge of Misurina, the most dangerous of the three. The Cadorini were supported by Hungarian troops, and a body of Friulians from the Tagliamento. The Tyrolese lay as before about Landro; and a general attack upon them was arranged, of which a trumpet at dawn was to give the signal. That night, however, Negrone, the noblest of the Cadore leaders, was foully slain, the result of an old grudge, by Mistino, commanding the Tagliamento people, who, threatening Vecellio and the other captains with death on the spot if they attempted to escape and raise the villages on their route, made good an immediate retreat over Mauria to their own district. This event struck the honest mountaineers with horror and grief. Fortunately, the Duke's army presently broke up their quarters and retired, so that the failure of the enterprise against them proved not so serious as it might have been.

Sigismund soon after concluded a truce with the Venetians, and then with a magnificent escort of Hungarians, Bohemians, and Germans, proceeded to Belluno, where he held his court, while attempting to arrange with the Pope for a General Council. The near neighbourhood of so great a potentate must have been a considerable event for Cadore, and they characteristically gained an advantage out of it by inducing him to compel their old rivals, the Bellunese, to rebuild the bridge at Capo di Ponte over the Piave, so necessary to Cadore traffic with Venice, and which Belluno in its destruction had hoped to divert.

Venice was now, indeed, to be all important to Cadore. The Republic had gradually conquered all Friuli, the power of the Patriarchs was at an end, and it was represented to the Cadore people that they ought to follow, of their own will, the fortunes of the province with which they had been so long connected. With the fidelity of mountaineers, however, they would not do so till absolved from their oath to the Patriarch.

Then occurred a picturesque and interesting incident in the history of the little community. They held solemn assembly to determine to whom they should surrender their allegiance; whether to the German Emperor, the Duke of Milan, or the Great Republic. There was much discussion, for each had adherents, when a member of the Council exclaimed, 'We are Christians; let us have recourse to Him who is the fountain of light to show us what we ought to do.'

Immediately the whole assembly rising, marshalled themselves in procession, and in presence of a great multitude, anxiously awaiting the decision, took the road to a chapel dedicated to the Holy Spirit at Valle, two miles distant, a village whose striking situation must have rendered the scene doubly impressive. There they knelt in prayer, sang the Mass of the Holy Ghost, and returned on foot as they came, after two hours' absence, to the council hall at Pieve. Then, as with one voice, the cry arose: 'Let us go to the good Venetians;' and the people in the piazza below, catching the words through the open window, took them up with enthusiasm, and answered with a great shout, 'Let us go to the good Venetians: it is best, it is best!' So the momentous choice was made by which, among other results, Titian became a citizen of Venice. Four deputies were chosen to convey the decision, with certain important conditions attached, to the Doge. These comprised stipulations, that no new taxes should be imposed; that the power of making laws should remain with themselves; that they should not be required to serve out of their own country; and that an harbour should be granted them at Venice, near S. Francesco della Vigna. All these were acceded to; and, to mark the goodwill of the government, the Cadorini were invited to select their captain from among the Venetian nobles. Little did Venice dream of the glory the humble mountain valley was to bring her!

This important event took place in 1420. The fortresses, it seems, were not in the power of the Cadorini to surrender, for the following year the Castle of Pieve was taken by force of arms, and that of Bottestagno purchased for 7,000 gold ducats. Manfred, Count of Collalto, was made captain of the former, and a member of the illustrious family of Galeazzi put in charge of the latter. Nine years afterwards, so satisfied were the Venetian Government with their new dependency, that the privilege of citizenship was offered to the Cadorini, who joyfully accepted it.

Cadore was now in high prosperity. Fresh mines were opened; commerce, as was likely under such masters, was greatly stimulated; roads and bridges were everywhere repaired; laws and statutes revised; and, taking an active part in all this, the name of Vecellio as syndic more than once occurs. In one particular, the energies of the people took an unfortunate direction. Witches were vigorously hunted out and destroyed; but the work was so distasteful, that executioners were sent for from Germany, the payment of whom is entered in the accounts at sixty lire. The stipulated exemption of the Cadorini from military service, except in defence of their own frontiers, left them at present untroubled by the Venetian wars; but after a while an illustrious senator appeared, charged to represent the danger that not Venice only, but all Christendom, incurred from the Turks, and to ask for at least a grant of timber for the Venetian fleet.

Flattered by the request, and sufficiently impressed with the peril, the Cadorini responded with alacrity, and made, besides, a present of one of their richest forests, near the Misurina pass, for the perpetual use of the Venetian arsenal; a grant which remained in operation till the seizure of Venice by Napoleon.

Of course there were sometimes jars in these amicable relations. As when the Venetian senate once arbitrated in a dispute in favour of the hated Bellunese; and again when, believing their calumnious reports, that Bottestagno was not kept in proper repair, they sent a commission to examine it. This was looked upon as a great affront, and Conte Vecellio, grandfather of Titian, was deputed to convey a remonstrance. Another little breeze arose from a demand for 200 labourers, to help in constructing defensive works upon the Isonzo—out towards Trieste. The number was at last reduced to fifty; and it is an interesting evidence of the perpetuity of family names in these valleys that the officer in charge was a Ghedina of Ampezzo; a circumstance which may impress the traveller with a certain respect for his host, when he finds himself under the present Ghedina's roof in the comfortable inn at Cortina. So also should he ever be a guest at Cercena's humble hearth in the Val di Zoldo; it is well he should know that the Cercenas of that spot are mentioned in documents more than 500 years old.

More serious difficulties by far were those with

hostile neighbours, such as the Count of Tyrol and the Count of Görtz. Their continual attempts to filch small bits of territory led to much bloodshed; while a constant feud with the former was on hand in consequence of his determination to tax the traffic through Cadore; or, when thwarted, his stopping it altogether, which, as it chiefly consisted of grain, was a very serious matter. The inconvenience, indeed, was so great, that it led to the establishment of public granaries, one for each commune; the building and storing of these being for a long time the chief business of the Cadore people.

Sometimes, too, there was trouble with the captains in charge of the castle. One of them, a Contarini, so misbehaved himself, that the council, without waiting the expiration of his term, appointed another, and the people at their bidding assaulted his stronghold with hatchets, pickaxes, and scythes; overpowered the obnoxious captain, and dismissed him the country; a hint which proved sufficient to check the like conduct in others.

Nor should we omit the daring exploit of an outlawed robber, upon whose head a price of 200 lire had been put. Resenting the smallness of the reward he, with a few of his men, penetrated one night by remote paths to Pieve, scaled the walls of the castle, and the captain being absent, carried off money and plate to the value of nearly 6,000 ducats, leaving behind a piece of paper with the words, 'Did I not say Jachello

was worth more than 200 lire?' The thing caused great consternation, and a special embassy was despatched to Venice about it.

These alarms, however, were nothing compared with that of an irruption of the Turks into Friuli in 1479, which at first almost paralysed the Cadorini with fear. They summoned courage, nevertheless, to occupy Mauria and all the passes in that direction in strong force, and the danger passed away. It was quickly followed by another on their western border, from an attempt of the Austrian Archduke to seize Caprile, only repulsed after sharp fighting. This succession of alarms led to the formation of a permanent militia force among the Cadorini youth. They were instructed in the use of firearms, and a sort of dictatorship was arranged to come into action at all times of invasion.

It was scarcely then at an era of peace, though perhaps of tolerable prosperity for the energetic little country, that Titian was born in 1497. There was evidently enough both of wars and rumours of wars abroad, and of stirring incidents at home, to impress his boyish imagination.

It is noticeable, too, that art decoration received much attention about this time. Several of the country churches were rebuilt, and frescoes and pictures were everywhere in request, the more so that few of the earlier works of the sort were then extant. Almost the only exceptions were those in St. Ursula at

Vigo,* dating from 1356, two figures from which, portraits of the founder and his wife, were afterwards copied by Cesare Vecellio, for his book upon 'Ancient Costumes.' The townhouse, or 'palace,' as they called it, of Pieve, was erected in the latter part of this century, the meetings of the council having previously taken place in the church; and, in 1492, the arms of St. Mark were painted on the tower, together with those of the noble Venetians who had served as captains of the castle. Shortly before Titian's birth too, by order of the council, a 'Majesta,' or representation of Christ as king, was placed in a roadside shrine 'for the comfort of travellers;' and at this period, also, Antonio Rossi, a native of Tai, and Titian's first instructor, executed the several frescoes in the neighbourhood referred to (p. 107). Altogether there seems to have been a good deal of art in the air, when the infant Titian first began to breathe it.

At the close of the fifteenth century, Cadore, notwithstanding alarms and dangers from without, was internally in a flourishing condition, while it enjoyed practical independence, so that the young Titian at Venice might well be proud of being at once a citizen of the great Republic and 'a man of Cadore.' But the early part of the sixteenth century, the period of his manhood, was to see his country plunged into frightful

* Vigo is a village at the foot of Monte Cornon, across the Piave, and about twelve miles from Pieve. The frescoes, as retouched by Cesare, are still visible: see Chap. VIII.

miseries, from which it never recovered. Hitherto the prompt vigilance and bravery of the inhabitants had proved a sufficient defence against encroaching or quarrelsome neighbours; now Cadore was to be involved in the issues of a great war between great powers, a crisis to which its resources were entirely unequal. We have come to the time when Venice had to struggle for existence against France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, and when Cadore, as a Venetian dependency, was exposed to the full force of the blows aimed by the Emperor Maximilian against the hated republic. And it is remarkable that, some years before the contingency arrived, the people of Cadore seem to have divined its likelihood. In the last year of the century, they set about erecting a fortress at Lozzo, six miles north of Pieve, pressing on the works so fast that it was finished the following year; and later they sent to the Doge, calling attention to their exposed situation, when he despatched the afterwards renowned Alviano, whose greatest victory was to be achieved on Cadore fields, to examine their defences, upon which occasion he directed both Bottestagno and Lozzo to be strengthened. But having now arrived at events in which Titian was interested, we must reserve them for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE OF CADORE.

Titian's lost battlepiece—Its various titles—Its date—Descriptions by eye-witnesses—Fontana's engraving—Its subject, the Battle of Cadore—Narrative of the battle—Maximilian: his invasion of Cadore; Alviano; the two Vecelli; the march, the fight, the result—Burgmair's woodcut—The picture compared with the narrative—Titian's oil sketch in the Uffizi—His original drawing; his two chalk studies—The Wellesley sale.

THE most important event in the annals of Cadore is the battle of that name, which has even found a place in general history. Nor could anything of a public nature during his long life have touched Titian more closely, fought as it was in his familiar native fields, during the most active part of his career, and noticeably engaged as were some of his relatives in the strategy that led to it. And, further, it claims our attention, since it has long held a curious place in the the art-life of Titian; and perhaps the reader will better understand why he has been brought through all the previous history of Cadore, and will be better prepared to follow the incidents of the action itself, if we tell the art story first.

In 1577 then, the year following that of the dreadful pestilence in which Titian died, Venice suffered a further misfortune in the destruction by fire of a large

portion of the ducal palace, including the hall of the Great Council, decorated with historical paintings from the hands of the greatest masters of that great age. Three spaces had remained vacant, and Titian, then ninety years old or more, and occupied with important commissions from Philip of Spain, had recommended Tintoretto, P. Veronese, and his own son Orazio as best qualified to fill them. Two pictures, however, by Titian himself, and executed in the best vigour of his days, already adorned the hall, and one was deemed his masterpiece. During the forty years of its existence it was a favourite subject with students of art, and its destruction was reckoned one of the most deplorable results of the fire.

It was a battlepiece, the only work of the kind, it appears, ever executed by Titian, who, with the true instinct of art, preferred subjects of rich and quiet beauty. Yet from the power it displayed in dealing with complicated composition and violent action, it materially enhanced his reputation, silencing, as Aretino tells us, those detractors who had hitherto styled him only a portrait painter. The similar works of Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo may have roused the emulation of Titian to this attempt. Any way it is singular that none of the three should have been spared to us. The 'Anghiari' and the 'Pisa' have alike disappeared. These, however, never existed otherwise than as cartoons, while Titian's subject was completed on canvas, and took its place as a national monument.

But I have not yet named this picture, and in truth this is the difficulty. Strange to say, notwithstanding its renown, and that several descriptions, more or less minute, have come down to us, there prevails an extraordinary confusion and controversy upon this simple point. Witness the following brief summary of opinions: Northcote, following some inexplicable vagary, affirms the subject to have been a victory of the Venetians over the Ghiaradadda, or Turkish Janissaries. Sir Abraham Hume, more rationally, says that it was the *Battle* of Ghiaradadda, called also Agnadello, between the Venetians and the French in 1509, but that the landscape was studied from that of Cadore. Ticozzi holds that there were *two* battle-pieces by Titian in the hall, one representing the action at Cadore in 1508, and painted, by request of the Senate in 1515, to afford Titian an excuse for not accepting the Pope's invitation to Rome; and the other that of Ghiaradadda, commissioned by Doge Gritti, who had distinguished himself there. This, after being fifteen years in hand, was finished, he believes, in 1537.

Maier asserts that the only two pictures in the hall by Titian were the Interview between Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III. at Venice, left unfinished by G. Bellini, and completed by Titian; and the battle of Spoleto, fought in 1155, between the inhabitants of that town and the same Barbarossa, which, originally painted by Guariento but fallen into decay, was

repainted—still as the battle of Spoleto—by Titian. Ridolfi, on the other hand, who has left the fullest description of the picture, calls it distinctly the Battle of Cadore. Vasari, in a short notice, gives it the title of Ghiaradadda. F. Sansovino, the son of Titian's famous friend, is Maier's authority for Spoleto. Aretino and Dolce, who refer to or describe the picture, omit to name it at all. Naturally more recent writers only perpetuate the confusion, which it is surely time to clear up if possible. It should be added that, till lately, no engraving or other record of this great public work has been known to exist, or has at least been quoted in the controversy, except a very rare print by Giulio Fontana.

Authorities so far, then, leave the matter a very pretty puzzle. Let us first settle, if we can, whether there were two battlepieces or one. This is not difficult. Maier, a keen commentator upon Ticozzi, shows, chiefly from the direct evidence of F. Sansovino, who, writing only three years after the fire, carefully enumerates and describes in order all the pictures in the hall, that it contained no second battlepiece by Titian. If indeed Sansovino's list is to be relied on, nothing more need be said on this point. But it may be further noted that Dolce, in his 'Dialogo,' expressly speaks of two pictures only by Titian in the hall, lamenting there were so few,—one, the Interview between the Pope and Barbarossa, the other 'A Battle.' And again: that while Ticozzi, the

principal advocate of the dual theory, declares in one place, the picture of the battle of Ghiaradadda to have been quite different from that of Cadore; he elsewhere quotes from Vasari's description of the former an incident, that of 'a terrible rain from heaven,' which belongs also to Ridolfi's careful description of the latter, and is a marked feature in Fontana's engraving. Once more, Vasari speaks of the picture as 'the best of all the historical pieces in the hall,' in a manner which suggests that no competing battlepiece by Titian was to be seen there.

We may pass then to the more difficult question of the proper designation of this great work of Titian's. And in the first place, if it were Ghiaradadda at all, it was not a combat with Janissaries. Ghiaradadda is a real place, where the Venetians met far other adversaries; and the only question can be,—did Titian ever illustrate that indubitable battle on the *Adda*, in the plains of Lombardy, fought 14th of May, 1509, between the Venetians commanded by Petigliano, and the French under Louis XII.? Now the fact that this was one of the greatest disasters that ever befell the proud Republic, appears a sufficient answer. It was the first great blow inflicted by the League of Cambrai, and deprived Venice, almost at a stroke, of all her Italian possessions. Was it likely then, under any circumstances, to be selected for national commemoration? It is true the reason assigned is the special glorification of the Doge Gritti, who is said to have

commissioned the picture in consequence of his admiration of the Peter Martyr. Such commissions, however, always appear as decreed by the Senate; and besides, Maier, whose argument we may so far follow, shows that this otherwise distinguished statesman and warrior, being in that campaign purveyor-general of the forces, simply accompanied Petigliano and a large portion of the army in that disastrous retreat, which left their comrades under the gallant Alviano to sustain, with desperate but fruitless valour, the whole brunt of the action. Gritti, therefore, performed here no other exploit than that of successfully running away!

Was it then Spoleto? The destruction of that Umbrian town in 1155, by the Emperor Barbarossa, in revenge for a slight upon his imperial claims, in no way concerned Venetian interests, nor the glory of Venetian arms. It was indeed painted in 1365, as part of a series illustrating the bloody feud between the Emperor and the Pope, which the Venetians had the honour of accommodating in the memorable meeting on the slab of red marble in the portico of St. Mark. But when, 150 years afterwards, the best painters of Venice were employed to re-decorate the hall, though the circumstances of the Pope's residence in Venice and the Venetian triumph over the Emperor were again commemorated, there was no imaginable reason for preserving the remembrance of an obscure event in which Venice had not been concerned, while there was every reason for replacing it by the record of some recent victory.

Fresh light too is thrown upon the subject when we come to the question of dates. It appears that Titian applied on the 1st of May, 1513, for permission to work in the hall of the Grand Council, beginning 'dal teler, nel qual è quella battaglia da la banda verso la piazza;' the colours and boys to grind them being provided at the public expense. And, in confirmation of this, we find that a decree of the 13th of May, 1513 (referred to by Sanuto in his 'Diari') was issued to the effect, that 'Tiziano, the famous painter, should work in the hall of the Grand Council, without any salary beyond the accustomed guarantee, which had been granted to those who had previously worked there.' The guarantee referred to was that of succeeding to the 'Sanseria'—a lucrative office bestowed upon the chief Venetian painter of the day—on the first vacancy. Titian, the following year, appears to have made complaints of impediments thrown in his way, and of the refusal of necessary assistance, such as payment to the boys, &c., accounting thus for slow progress. Now what this picture was is unluckily not stated; but, from its situation 'towards the piazza,' it must have been the Barbarossa interview, which also Sansovino states to have been the first he painted in the hall. It was, however, speedily followed by the battle-piece, for Cadorin adduces a decree of the Senate, dated 1537, stating that 'in 1516 it was declared that Titian should enter upon the Sanseria held by G. Bellini (then deceased), under the condition that he should

paint the picture of the *land battle* in the hall of our Grand Council towards the piazza, over the Canal Grande.' This, therefore, was certainly *the* battlepiece. As already shown, there was no other, and the whole story, even with Vasari to back it, of a Ghiaradadda painted many years afterwards for Doge Gritti, falls to the ground. But the date of this last decree (1537) is probably at the bottom of much of the confusion that has arisen. It was carelessly supposed to refer to a picture *then* commissioned, while in truth it was retrospective, declaratory, for some reason or other, of the circumstances under which Titian had entered upon his Sanseria. An obscurity arises from the mention (in 1513) of a battlepiece from which Titian was to 'begin.' Sansovino's list shows no adjoining subject of the kind. It must have been effaced,—possibly by Titian's work.

We have now then cleared the ground for Cadore, and, after all, our best disproof of the claims of Ghiaradadda, Spoleto, or any other battle, will lie in the proof we can bring in favour of Cadore. That this was truly the subject of Titian's great picture will, I think, be put beyond question when we have compared the several descriptions of it with Fontana's plate, with the incidents of the action, and with the present features of the battlefield.

Let us first listen to those who, having seen the picture in its place, have chanced to speak of it. Vasari is one of these, but he records scarcely any-

thing more than one incidental accessory. 'The great rout of Ghiaradadda, a battle in which he depicted a crowd of soldiers who fought whilst a terrible rain fell from heaven, which work is taken from life, and accounted the finest of all the pictures in that hall.' This is all we get from him.

F. Sansovino, who was sixteen years old when the picture was painted, says in his general description of the hall above referred to :—'In the fifth compartment Titian, with incredible industry and art, painted the battle of Spoleto in Umbria, where, among other fine things, is seen a captain, who, suddenly awakened by the noise of the strife, causes himself to be armed by a lad, and on whose breast a cuirass painted with wonderful skill, shines with the reflected brilliance of the arms and the dress of the boy. There is also a horse of extreme beauty, and a young girl climbing out of a hollow, whose countenance shows great fear.' Sansovino adds, '*underneath this picture there is no inscription*;' a remark we must recur to presently.

Dolce writes : 'On the other side of the hall he executed a battlepiece, in which are various figures of soldiers, horses, and other very notable objects. Amongst them is a young girl, who, having fallen into a hollow, climbs up the bank, stretching out her leg with a most natural action ; and the limb appears, not paint, but flesh itself.'

So far the eye-witnesses, who seem to have been each attracted by some different feature in the compo-

sition. Now comes Ridolfi, who, though he had not seen the picture, must, judging from the fulness of his description, including all the foregoing particulars and adding others, have had some good copy before him. Speaking of it as the battle of Cadore, Ridolfi says: 'He' (Titian) 'had depicted the natural features of his country with the castle, placed upon a high mountain, which had caught fire from lightning, and from which issued dark masses of smoke, like clouds, mixed with the horrors of the sudden tempest. Meanwhile, the field below was choked with a horrible conflict of horse and foot soldiers, some of whom defended with their long swords the Imperial banner, which, agitated by the wind, made fantastic revolutions in the air. In the midst of the fray were to be seen some fallen from their horses in coats of mail, and naked soldiers already slain. Crossing the bridge over the river, a company of horsemen passed to the assistance of their comrades. Amongst them waved the banner of St. Mark; and close by was Liviano (Alviano), the general of the army, leaning his hand upon a truncheon, whilst an esquire fastened for him the shoulder-piece of his armour; and, a little further, a groom clothed in a red slashed doublet, holding a white courser, which, excited by the sound of the trumpet, shook its flowing mane from its proud neck, and whose flanks shone like white silk. Finely represented, also, was a half naked wretch, who, fallen into the stream, attempted, dripping with water, to reclimb the bank, and a beautiful girl, in an

attitude of grief, and clinging to the sprigs among the rocks, who appeared composed of snow and blood, so delicately had he imitated the freshness of flesh. The picture in fine was full of figures, in which Titian showed the knowledge he possessed in crowded composition, combining a natural propriety in all matters with a careful display of art, so that the picture became an example for all students, while mortifying the temerity of those who had predicted his eminence only in portrait painting.'

Now, however, variously named or described by these four writers, it is yet clear that they all speak of the same picture; and it will be yet clearer to anyone having Fontana's plate before him, which, be it remembered, has always borne the title of Titian's 'Battle of Cadore.' This engraving, feeble in execution and in drawing, was yet an important work in those days, and must have been executed in Titian's lifetime. Curiously enough, it shares in the obscurity and confusion which attach to the picture, for it has been variously attributed to Battista and to Giulio Fontana, and, if by the latter, seems to have been his only work. Dr. Wellesley's impression is marked by an unknown hand, 'Battista Fontana. Pièce très-rare et inconnu, à M. Bartsch.' Yet this authority, on the other hand, distinctly claims it as the work of Giulio.* The two Fontanas were relatives, and Battista at any rate lived

* The explanation may be that M. Bartsch's knowledge of the engraving was first derived from this very impression.

FONTANA'S ENGRAVING OF THE 'BATTLE OF CADORE.'

at Verona and executed numerous works. Where Giulio lived, or what he did other than this, no one knows. Let us be thankful that this one work, the hitherto sole unquestioned relic of a lost picture, has been preserved. In this engraving a bridge over a ravine occupies the centre of the composition, which is built up round it. On the right of the spectator is Alviano, evidently a portrait, standing in an observant attitude, while a boy adjusts a buckle. His groom with a small white horse is close at hand, both answering exactly to Ridolfi's spirited description; and knights and men-at-arms under the banner of St. Mark are preparing to cross the bridge, while some are galloping over it. On the other side is the mêlée of horsemen in conflict, and slain and wounded men tumbling down the sides of the ravine in heaps; a soldier falling from his horse being here the prominent figure. Out of this ravine, on the Alviano side, the poor girl with the leg, so much praised by the critics, is seen clambering up the rocks. In the distance above the struggling horsemen on the spectator's left, is the castle, throwing out volumes of smoke; a burning house is nearer the scene of action; and filling up the gorge, which is the chief feature of the landscape, is the tremendous thunder-storm and pouring rain.

It will be seen from this how skilfully Titian graduated the action of the piece. On the one side is only attention and orderly preparation; in the centre the movement quickens, and the rush begins; but the con-

fusion of the combat is entirely confined to the left hand portion of the picture. From the calm but energetic figure of the Venetian general in the lower corner on the right, the stream of action gathering impetus as it goes, sweeps in one great arch through the composition, and is precipitated on the opposite side in a cataract of destruction. In the midst, yet separated from the crisis of the conflict, is thrown in the one redeeming tender touch, which, in the figure of the terrified girl, links even this scene of fury with emotions of love and pity.*

Such, reflected in a feeble plate, are the features of the grand composition justly called Titian's 'great monumental work.' In identifying the subject, an obvious argument against its being that of the battle of Ghiaradadda is derived from the mountainous character of the scenery, so like that of Cadore, so unlike that of the low grounds of the Adda; a discrepancy which forces Sir Abraham Hume to suppose, that the landscape most familiar to Titian was transferred by him to the scene of the Lombard battle. It must be owing, however, to the rarity of Fontana's plate (which Ticozze himself appears to have never seen), that one decisive circumstance, though it may be learned from Ridolfi, seems to have escaped the notice of all who have written upon the subject. The Battle of Cadore was between the Venetians and the Imperialists, in that of

* There is no impression of this plate in the British Museum. The photograph is taken from Dr. Wellesley's copy.

Ghiaradadda the French were their antagonists; now the Imperial banner furiously flapping in the wind, and causing lively agitation in the claws and feathers of the well known Imperial bird, is as conspicuous in the composition on the one side, as the lions of St. Mark on the other.

But the most interesting portion of the proof, and that which renders it complete, is the story of the battle itself, to which we must now address ourselves.

Resuming then the interrupted narrative of Cadore affairs, it is the bold and brilliant figure of the Emperor Maximilian that now comes upon the scene. Gallant and restless, this Prince, generally unsuccessful though he might be, contrived to make his name ring through Europe from Flanders to Hungary; and by help of the art he invoked, especially in its new development in woodcut, he and his ponderous chivalry, wondrously beplumed and vizored, are amongst the most familiar figures of their age. Yet all the gorgeous show of the 'Triumph of Maximilian' does less for the real man it celebrates, than a single line of a contemporary chronicler who describes him as he was seen at Constance, 'wearing a little old green coat and cap, with a great green hat put over it'—a genuine Tyrolese costume, and curiously illustrating his love for Tyrol, which, he was accustomed to say, 'was a rough coat but it kept one warm.' And Tyrol is full of him;—in crags where he tumbled in hunting, in castles that he captured or

used as his strongholds, in his splendid but empty tomb at Innsbruck. In and out of Tyrol he was always passing. It was his gateway for Italy. To Cadore such a neighbour must naturally be an important personage, and events made him a very Satan. It came about in this wise.*

Early in 1508, the year before the breaking out of the League War, Maximilian, now German Emperor, and with Tyrol for the first time solidly included in the empire, demanded of the Venetians passage into Italy that he might be crowned in Rome. As he was to be accompanied by a suspiciously large force, the perhaps too prudent Senate refused, whereupon, in great wrath, he vowed to open a way with his sword. This he first attempted from Trent and by way of the Val Sugana,

* As respects this great crisis in Cadore affairs, and especially the battle itself, there are several authorities. Sanuto prints an official report to the Venetian Government. A son of one of the Vecelli, who took a prominent part in the troubles, and who was himself afterwards chancellor of the community, drew up a narrative from the reports of his father and grandfather, which is still extant in MS., and from which Ciani quotes. A more extended history, in Latin, by Vincenzio Vecelli, master of the public school of Pieve in 1540, was unfortunately carried into Tuscany by a monk who succeeded him, and is lost. A personal narrative was written in the Cadore dialect by Matteo Palatini, one of the Cadore leaders of the defence; and a copy of this is preserved in the Canonica at Pieve, where also may be seen a recent MS. chronicle of Cadore by Giuseppe Monti of Candide, which gathers up many items, traditionary and otherwise, respecting the battle. Both these documents, through the kindness of Don Antonio Davia, parish priest of Pieve, I have had the advantage of consulting. Ciani's work is entitled, 'Storia del Popolo Cadorino.' Padua, 1856.

over the bleak table-land of the Sette Comuni—a short cut to Vicenza. There, however, the inhabitants in alliance, like those of Cadore, with Venice, and notwithstanding their ancient German descent, resisted him so stoutly, that, after four days' fighting, and the useless dragging up of artillery, he was forced to retreat. The baffled Emperor retired into Tyrol, and betaking

CORTINA.

himself to Brunecken in the Pusterthal, meditated a more deadly stroke upon his enemy through the Ampezzo and unlucky Cadore. The conduct of the invasion, however, was left to his generals. 7000 infantry, and 300 cavalry were pushed up to Landro, where in the little plain, and by the gloomy lake, which had at least twice before witnessed a similar hostile array, they

gathered themselves for a dash, either at the pass of Ampezzo, defended by the Castle of Bottestagno, or at that of Misurina, now in February under deep snow.

The Cadorini, warned by the captain of Bottestagno, had quickly assembled at Cortina, where, considering the snow upon Misurina a sufficient defence, they lay ready to support the garrison of the castle. More than one fierce assault it successfully resisted, when the Germans suddenly wheeled round upon the Misurina, struggled through the snow, surmounted the pass, and poured down upon Cortina, which the astonished Cadorini immediately abandoned, retreating to the narrow fortified defile of Venas below. The troops of Maximilian now assaulted Bottestagno in rear, but were still repulsed, the crag upon which it stands proving even more formidable on this side than the other; so spending no more time over such an eagle's nest, they turned southward after the Cadorini, and would have burnt San Vito on their way, but for the sudden intervention of St. Florian appearing in the guise of a well dressed gentleman, to deprecate the act. Assaulting Venas without success, they soon compelled its evacuation by climbing the flanks of the Antelao above; when the militia, afraid of being cut off, hastily abandoned their position, and it appears for the most part dispersed, leaving the way open to Pieve. The Germans then encamped in the fields between Tai and Pieve, displaying twelve pieces of artillery; and an eye-witness—Palatini—from the castle walls,

describes how a herald with ten horsemen rode forth to demand its surrender. There was a stormy scene within. Gissi, the Venetian captain, was for yielding at once, falsely denied possession of any cannon, and wept when accused of cowardice by the incensed Cadore leaders. These pressed by the threat of the enemy to burn the whole country, and paralysed by Gissi's pusillanimity, were at last compelled to agree to a capitulation, the terms of which were negotiated by the wily priest of San Vito—probably a near relative of St. Florian—in the German interest.

For the time Cadore was completely in the power of the enemy, who spared no pains to obtain a formal submission of the inhabitants to the Imperial rule. The Council assembled, and the modern historian of Cadore glories in recording their indignant refusal. Ciani even produces the speech of Palatini himself, in which he demands 'the Alps immense, wild, lofty; did not God place them there to divide us from you?—our streams, do they flow into German seas, or into those of Italy?' —and so on, the eloquence evidently the canon's own, and with an eye to modern exigencies. The commandant was obliged to content himself with military possession, and to maintain it in the poor mountain country arranged for a provision train every other day from the Ampezzo. Maximilian's object was so far attained that he had secured the doorway into Venetia.

The people, on their part, privately organized what we might call a committee of public safety, consisting

of fifteen of the principal inhabitants, charged, in the first place, to protect the women, children, and infirm, who, according to ancient usage upon a German irruption, had taken refuge in the mountain glens; and, next, to concert measures with the Venetian Government for the expulsion of the invaders. Of this committee it is interesting to find, along with Matteo Palatini, as prominent members, Andrea and Tiziano Vecelli; the latter was that cousin of our great painter, the head of the Vecelli family, who has been already mentioned. Titian himself, then thirty years of age, was no doubt working in Venice.

It was not long before the Venetian Senate, fully aware of the importance of Cadore, commissioned D'Alviano to attempt its deliverance. This general, afterwards renowned in the military annals of Venice, had but recently entered its service. He had acquired distinction in the Neapolitan wars under the great Gonsalvo, and had received the town of San Marco in Calabria for reward; but, deprived of it by intrigue, he repaired to Venice, and was now appointed to his first independent command. His personal appearance—for he was short of stature and deformed in countenance, the result of more than one scar in the wars—seems to have little corresponded to the high qualities of his mind. He was a patron of learning. Cotta, a man of some note, was his secretary, and accompanied him on this campaign, afterwards celebrating the Battle of Cadore in a Latin ode. Alviano himself, when subse-

quently a prisoner, wrote the history of his life, using for a pen the bristles of a brush, and for ink, charcoal and wine—a record unfortunately lost. His exploits, though not always successful, showed him to be a first-rate soldier. Alviano's recent survey of the Cadore country now no doubt served him well, and may indeed have led to his appointment; yet, whatever his qualifications for command, a 'proveditore,' or representative of the Government, was, according to jealous Venetian custom, associated with him. In this case, no less a person than Cornaro, brother to the Queen of Cyprus, was selected; and in a reference to the battle by a Venetian writer, the Venetian noble actually receives all the credit of the achievement.

In the month of March, when snow still covered the passes, Alviano assembled his troops in the Bellunese country to attack from the south; while, to assist his operations, Savorgnano, at the head of a considerable force, was ordered to advance from Friuli up the valley of the Tagliamento, and cross the mountains over that pass of Mauria, by which Hungarians, Turks, and other enemies had so frequently threatened Cadore. Savorgnano, effecting a passage in two days, established himself at Lorenzago, a village on the heights overhanging the Piave, and about ten miles above Cadore. He seized also the two fortified bridges over the Piave—Tre Ponti and Pelos—and thus effectually closed up the Germans in that direction. At Pelos he held consultation with the committee of fifteen, and the

two Vecelli now distinguished themselves by urging that Alviano should attempt to cut off the German troops from what Mr. Carlyle would style their 'bread basket' in the Ampezzo, by a flank movement up the Val di Zoldo, and over the unguarded pass of Cibiana, which would bring him down upon Venas. The Vecelli were deputed to suggest this to Alviano, and crossing from Lorenzago over that fantastic range of dolomite 'aiguilles' which lies east of Cadore—itself a perilous adventure at that season—they made their way by Longarone to Capo di Ponte, where they found the General, and Cornaro, who had just arrived. For a wonder, general and proveditore agreed both with the civilians and each other; and despatching the Vecelli to arrange with Savorgnano for a simultaneous attack, Alviano advanced with a select body of troops, 4,000 strong, up that grand defile opening at Longarone, to which we introduced the reader in our progress to Cadore, and which is still traversed only by a mule path, winding for the most part at a fearful height above the wooded depths in which the torrent raves. The passage of an army through this gorge, some fourteen miles long, with heavily mounted men-at-arms and four small cannon, is a marvel. They were also accompanied by a troop of the noted Stradiots or Albanians, light predatory horsemen, in the Venetian pay, of great service as well as disservice to them in their wars; but these, mounted on small Turkish horses, were probably used to scrambling.

Arrived at Forno in the Val di Zoldo, where many of the Cadorini had taken refuge, the army turned beneath the towering Sasso di Pelmo to ascend the pass leading to Cadore, men and horses struggling up the snow-encumbered steeps with the greatest difficulty, although Alviano had sent forward a large number of Val di Zoldo men to cut a passage for them. From the smooth saddle of the summit—in summer a crest of verdure—distant Cadore may be seen shining on its promontory, and the watchers on the castle walls might have discerned the glittering files winding down the white slopes but for heavy clouds hanging low upon the pass, which, while adding difficulty to the march, completely veiled it from the enemy. Night, too, was coming on, and in much disorder, sometime after dark, the Venetians reached Cibiana, a hamlet not far from the deep ravine of the Boita, and communicating with the villages of Venas and Valle on the Cadore side of the torrent by that slender bridge to which in the third chapter we drew the reader's notice.

Alviano, it seems, leaving Cornaro with the troops, had pushed on secretly and alone to Valle, and spent the night in a house where an inscription in a ground-floor chamber long remained to commemorate the fact. Here he communicated with Savorgnano, and as soon as he was joined by Cornaro, late as it was, and notwithstanding that snow was again falling heavily, summoned at once a strong body of troops across the perilous Boita bridge, and surprising the German detach-

ment in the fort at Venas, occupied the two villages four hours before day, giving strict orders against alarming the enemy.

At Valle, however, only two miles from Cadore, some reckless Stradiots, after their manner, set fire to a house, and the flames lighting up the whole country, and reflected by the snowy heights around, soon betrayed their peril to the Germans. Beating at once to arms, they at first drew out in order upon the hill adjoining the castle to await their unknown enemy; but perceiving that their provision train was now intercepted, presently took the bold resolution of cutting their way through, with the chance of surprising and discomfiting the Venetians by the suddenness of their attack; a project in which, 'for their sins,' says Palatini, 'God did not allow them to prosper.' Leaving eighty men to hold the castle, they moved out at dawn, stealing along the hill slopes. But Alviano was not to be so caught. He had early brought all his forces to the Cadore side of the Boita over the narrow bridge, and anticipating the purpose of the enemy, despatched Gambara, one of his captains, with a strong force to lie *perdue* at Nebbiu, a hamlet ensconced in a hollow under the Antelao, where they would be concealed from the advancing Germans till the decisive moment. Eight hundred infantry were marshalled upon the fields between Valle and the abrupt hill of Zucco lying nearer Cadore, and among the wooded sides of which a body of archers was posted, with

Valle and the Battle-field

instructions to delay, and, if possible in the confusion, capture the baggage of the Germans as they passed below. These troops, forming Alviano's right, were commanded by a Tuscan leader, Ranieri. In the centre, that is, in front of Valle, were drawn up the men-at-arms, mixed with infantry, under Alviano himself, mounted—as was now beginning to be the custom for a general-in-chief—not on a heavy charger but on an active cob. The field, and his position on the field, were admirably chosen. The sloping plateau, between the mountain flank and the ravine of the Boita, gave room for action, the mountain village on the one side and the wooded steeps on the other supplied his ambushes, and the Germans advanced as into a trap. Unsuspecting, they passed the fatal Nebbiu on their right. Its very name implies its situation among mountain mists, and at that morning hour of a day in March it was without doubt wrapped in clouds. Alviano, on his part showing but a small front, and at first retiring, led the Germans on till, 'at the first house of Valle,' near a small torrent, he turned and hurled against them his men-at-arms. When well engaged, down swooped Gambara from his cloudy covert upon their right flank, while Ranieri, with his 800 infantry, fell upon their left. The shock on all sides was irresistible: giving way before Gambara's onset, the Germans fell in heaps over a low terrace wall in the fields, concealed by the snow,*

* These terrace walls are numerous in the field, and may be recognised in plate xxiii.

and the ruin of Maximilian's army was completed by the result of a single combat between Strauss their general and Ranieri. The former, desperate with defeat, bore down upon the Tuscan leader lance in rest, and his thrust, though parried by an attendant, wounded Ranieri in the face, who, dealing a furious blow upon Strauss, stooping as he passed, felled him lifeless from his saddle.

Their general fallen, and beset on three sides, the Germans lost heart, threw down their arms, and besought quarter, which was ruthlessly denied. 1,800 fell on the field, and of the survivors flying mostly up the Ampezzo, few escaped the merciless and active Stradiots, who, dispersed in small bands, killed all they overtook. 5,000 are said to have perished in all; those only who fled up the Piave valley escaped with life, for, though falling into the hands of Savorgnano, he allowed them to regain their native valleys, most of them being Tyrolese.*

Savorgnano, according to the instructions faithfully conveyed by the two Vecelli along the same wild path by which they had reached Alviano, had advanced at dawn from the Tre Ponti towards Cadore, but did not reach the field till the battle was over. By that time, too, the old men, women, and children, hidden amongst

* Certain of the Cadorini militia must have served with Alviano, for their commander, Giacomo Alessandrini, slew a German captain, and the weapon of the slain man is to this day shown in the Casa Alessandriñi in Pieve. Another relic is a captured banner preserved at Valle.

Mte Ouromo and San Martino
with the Battle Burial Ground

the mountain fastnesses, had been warned by glad messengers of their deliverance, and began to pour down the hill sides. To some eye-witness we must surely owe a picturesque description in Ciani of the descending crowd above and the victorious troops below, marching now with banners flying and martial music—Alviano and his men towards Cadore, and Savorgnano in equally brave array returning towards the Tre Ponti. And we may trace to the same source a description of the battlefield, all dabbled with bloody snow, and heaped with dead, among whom were particularly noticed the bodies of three young women who had perished along with their husbands, or lovers, in the German army. One especially, it was observed, must have struggled desperately for life or honour. Her mournful fate found place in the narrative of the battle, and, as we believe, was commemorated by a greater hand than his that held the pen. The dead were buried near the little village of San Martino, but the head of every German was sent to Venice, a zecchino having been offered for each ghastly trophy. But it was not needed to supplement the hate; one fugitive, so tradition has it, had reached Comelico, and lay down to sleep in a wild-hay hut; there he was discovered by a woman, who with an axe decapitated the sleeper.

It only remains to add that, two days afterwards, the castle was stormed and taken, not without loss to the besiegers, a certain Malatesta, son of the Duke of

Rimini, in particular, having his skull cracked by one of the round stones, kept in store for such purposes, rolled down from above. Sixty, out of its garrison of eighty, perished in the defence, and its brave governor, honourably dismissed by Alviano, was murdered on his way into Tyrol by the Stradiots. The victory was complete; Cadore was entirely freed from the enemy, and the feat of arms was thought so brilliant, as well as opportune, that the Venetian senate, besides various emoluments, decreed a public triumph to Alviano on his return to Venice. This very rare distinction, accompanied as it was by much popular ridicule of the Germans, enraged Maximilian to such a degree, that it had much to do with his eager adherence to the League of Cambrai the following year.

The battle and its result have been much overlooked by historians, hastening to the great events of the League war. But that Maximilian reckoned it no slight matter, and kept it in remembrance, we have curious evidence in the allegorical romance of 'Der Weiss Kunig,' in which the Emperor under that guise gave the story of his education and of his deeds. It is illustrated by numerous woodcuts, most of them by Burgmair, a contemporary of Albert Dürer, and after him the greatest designer of his day. They are full of quaint force and rough pathos. In this singular book the Battle of Cadore finds a place, both in letter-press and illustration. The narrative, like the rest of the story, is meagre and obscure; but the design (No. 83)

BURGMAIR'S BATTLE OF CADORE.

is among those signed by Burgmair, and one of the best. His instructions must have come from the Emperor's own lips, and no doubt represent his version of the defeat, which he was too magnanimous to disguise, for the Germans are taking to their heels pell-mell, one indignant standard-bearer only, turning round in his flight with a gesture of defiance. But the ambush is as marked a feature. The landscape, rightly made exceedingly mountainous, shows the castle of Cadore placed upon a height, and the Venetian knights, lance in rest, rushing from a cleft in the hills, while a little above, from a second cleft (surely the fatal Nebbiu), another party is pouring down. The winged Lion of St. Mark is conspicuous on their banner, and at first sight it is a little puzzling to note in the van of the attack three or four Oriental looking horsemen with *hats*—absolutely hats! Yet these were, no doubt, meant for those terrible Stradiots whom the enemies of Venice had such cause to detest. As a final touch of verisimilitude, I may point to certain jagged outlines tolerably suggesting the weird dolomites around.

But returning to the Venetian view of the case: when we put together the political importance of the battle, its renown as a military achievement, its connection with Titian's native country, the part his own relatives took in the affair, can we resist the belief that when, five years afterwards, a 'land battle' was to be painted by him in the great hall, no other subject should be at once so agreeable to the Venetian govern-

ment, wounded by the memory of subsequent defeats, and so interesting to himself? The presumption is very strong, but a comparison of the incidents of the picture with those of the narrative and the nature of the ground, makes it stronger.

In the single arched bridge for instance, spanning the deep ravine, we recognise at once that still existing over the torrent of the Boita which Alviano crossed to the attack. It is only indeed by artistic licence that it is made a leading feature in the composition; yet it will be observed, that the painter has been careful to keep all the fighting on the Cadore side, and is thus more literally true to fact than at first appears. Again, the incident of the burning house finds its actual counterpart in the story, and in the picture occupies its true position. The castle of Cadore, though scarcely visible from the field, is yet just where Titian puts it, the hills being only lowered to admit of its introduction, as the gorge of the Boita and Monte Zucco are both modified to suit the requirements of a figure subject. Further, the small white horse held by a groom while Alviano has a buckle tightened, receives its explanation in the 'little horse,' or cob, which the general mounted for the action. But the most interesting identification is that of the female figure clinging piteously to the rocks, with that hapless girl whose fate drew special notice on the actual battlefield. Titian might have been excused for introducing this figure simply for the contrast between fair flesh and bronzed warriors,

feminine terror and battle fury; or for the sudden subtle appeal it makes to the spectator's sympathy; a brighter flash of genius is seen in the circumstance that he adapted a literal fact to the purposes of art.

Another artistic device has a more curious justification. While the Venetians are in the full armour of that time, their adversaries are accoutred like Roman soldiers. The contrast was convenient, but it was fairly suggested by Maxmilian's claims to the Roman crown and headship of the holy Roman empire. The snow amidst which the battle was fought does not appear in the picture, but, as already noticed, Titian's feeling for colour always forbad that horrid whiteness. When this same subject was, after the rebuilding of the palace, confided to Francesco Bassano, and painted where it is still to be seen in a small compartment of the ceiling, in the great hall, the snow was duly introduced. Titian leaves out snow, but he puts in rain and lightning. I must confess to some disappointment that the narrative makes no mention of such a tempest. It is the one brick wanting; Palatini gives no hint of it. Would that the Vecelli MS. were at hand for examination! Titian, who so ingeniously worked up every circumstance to his purpose, surely had warrant for this; as also for the fire among the buildings of the castle, most probably a conflagration of stores not intended to fall into Venetian hands.

I have completed my case, and trust the evidence is conclusive. But in proportion to its strength is the

wonder how the battle-picture ever got any other name than that of Cadore! It is now, I fear, past finding out. Some clue may lie in the fact recorded by F. Sansovino, that underneath that picture alone '*there was no inscription.*' Its subject then was left to hear-say; and that it was ever called the battle of Spoleto may no doubt be explained from its occupying the panel formerly devoted to that subject, and probably from the old name remaining unexpunged in the catalogue. Vasari's 'Ghiaradadda' is more puzzling. Possibly the introduction of Alviano, who was the chief hero of that defeat as he was of the Cadore triumph, may have led to the confusion; or some picture for Doge Gritti may have been painted which was running in Vasari's head while the pen was in his hand.

But the history of the picture, or rather of its relics, is yet to be traced a little farther. Fontana's engraving is *not* the only pictorial record of its existence. It is wholly inexplicable that several biographies of Titian and catalogues of his works should have omitted to notice an oil sketch for the battle attributed to Titian, upon the walls of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. It is entitled there 'Bataille entre les troupes impériales et l'armée vénétienne à Cadore.' This sketch, about four feet square, is, as a sketch might be, very loose in drawing, and is also deficient in chiaroscuro; but it is quite Titianesque in colour, and its genuineness is proved by its variations from, no less than by its agreement with, the engraving. In the latter, represent-

ing no doubt the final state of the picture, the ravine is wider, thus drawing out the composition to a greater length, and a passive group of horsemen behind Alviano is added for the same purpose—perhaps to adapt the picture to a differently proportioned panel from that at first intended. We can scarcely doubt that the Florence sketch was the original idea for colour.*

More interesting still, however, is a small but exquisitely detailed pen and ink drawing, which there is every reason to believe was Titian's final design for the intended picture. He was accustomed, even for his largest subjects, to prepare such an outline, carefully drawn to scale; and this drawing always accepted as a genuine Titian, after passing through the collections of Sir Thomas Lawrence and Esdaile, (and, as appears from the signature, that of the engraver Rota,) came, along with a spirited study in chalk from the same collections for one of the figures, into the hands of the late Dr. Wellesley, who was the first apparently to appreciate their real significance. As part of the evidence upon this question, I may be allowed to state how I first became acquainted with them. Not long returned from Cadore, and from hunting up everything connected with Titian among his native mountains, I was favoured with an introduction to Dr. Wellesley, and spent many hours of a winter day, when Oxford, empty and desolate, lay

* I have been informed at Cadore, that it was stolen from a private house there.

muffled in deep snow, in examining the innumerable treasures with which the shelves and floor of his library were loaded. It was past midnight, and Fontana's engraving had already been discussed, when Dr. Wellesley, placing a drawing upon the table, quietly observed, 'Here is the original design for the Battle of Cadore,' and adjusting another by its side—'This is a study for one of the figures.' Even then I knew enough to understand the interest of the discovery, and to examine them long and closely. The pen drawing, about nine inches square, on a yellow ground, the lights touched with white, is executed with admirable precision and minuteness. Every feature, every limb, each strap and buckle even, is carefully delineated, and yet with unfailing spirit and decision; the delicacy of the whole being only marred by what adds to the interest, and is a valuable proof of authenticity, namely two or three alterations in a different ink, which according to the engraving were not finally adopted. The most noticeable of these are a variation in the turn of a horse's head, and the suggestion of a shield upon the arm of Alviano's groom. The burning house, the 'terrible rain,' the distant castle, are all shown in firm though few strokes; and the character and grace thrown into the figures of Alviano and the frightened girl, and indeed all the figures, put the drawing immeasurably above Fontana's transcript of the finished picture.

wild warriors characteristically in the van of the Venetian horse.

The second Wellesley drawing is a study in chalk on grey paper, squared for transference, for the falling horseman; and here again are certain variations from the engraving, obliterated traces of which can be discerned in the pen-drawing—glimpses of the working of the master's thought, which in this instance had perhaps a curious history. Sir Joshua Reynolds in his 15th Discourse, speaking of an adaptation by Tintoretto of the Samson of Michael Angelo, says, 'Titian, in the same manner, has taken the figure which represents God dividing the light from the darkness, in the vault of the Capella Sistina, and has introduced it in the famous Battle of Cadore, so much celebrated by Vasari; and, extraordinary as it may seem, it is here converted to a general falling from his horse. A real judge who should look at this picture would immediately pronounce the attitude of that figure to be in a greater style than any other figure of the composition.' Sir Joshua's acquaintance with the picture beyond the descriptions that have been left us, must have been derived from the Fontana plate, and perhaps from the sketch in the Uffizi, unless indeed the Wellesley drawings had passed under his eye.

A reduced copy of this study is given in pl. xxviii. The horse of this figure is especially referred to by Maier as a proof of the versatility of Titian's genius. He points to the 'boldness and novelty

Titian's Sketch
for the falling Horseman

of the action, wonderfully expressing the fury of the fall, and the violence of the effort to support itself.' It is not, however, the most fortunate part of the picture. In the horses of the pen drawing, that which is really fine is the expression of the heads; the creatures seem to snuff the battle and to answer to the trumpet; reminding one that, after all, Titian's greatest strength lay in portraiture. Indeed, if with the design before me I may venture to citicise the picture, it would seem to have somewhat justified and explained the observations of both Michael Angelo and Tintoretto, to the disparagement of Titian's power of drawing. The drawing is, indeed, very fine in detail, and within certain limits; but it wants variety, and there is a marked avoidance of difficult foreshortening, a defect especially noticeable in the soldier falling from the bridge, who is too like one of those card figures whose limbs, all on the same plane, work in pairs by the pulling of a string. Imagine the grand contortions of such a figure in the hands of a Buonarrotti or a Rubens! On the other hand, for a portrait attitude, what can be finer than that of Alviano,* while the countenance is touched in with wonderful individuality, suggesting that one result of his many wounds, and the chief cause of the deformity historians speak of, was a broken nose. For

* A monumental statue of this general is in the church of San Salvatore at Venice, but it is too highly placed to allow the features to be identified.

portrait vigour we may point also to the two excited drummers.

Another study in chalk, and apparently on part of the same sheet of grey paper, I have seen in the Medicean collection of drawings in the Uffizi. Its subject is also one of the equestrian figures; and amongst that prodigious mass of art material it is very possible there may be other studies for so full a composition.

These four, however—two in Florence and two in England—one in oil colour, one in ink, and two in chalk—are the only relics of the picture, I believe, at present known which can be assigned to the hand of Titian. Of copies, besides Fontana's plate, there is supposed to exist a large drawing by Martin Rota, once in the Lawrence collection but afterwards sold abroad, and with this the list closes. But if students copied the great picture, some of their oil copies must surely somewhere exist? One such copy we have already referred to, made in his youth by that Leonardo Corona of Murano, who afterwards rented Titian's house and garden at Venice. This was held in high esteem at Verona, and may be suspected to have furnished the original from which Fontana (a Veronese) engraved his plate. I find no recent account of it, and had its existence been known of late years, Ticozzi might have been expected to refer to it.

After Dr. Wellesley's death his treasures were dispersed, during a fourteen days' sale. Mr. Sotheby's

rooms were crowded with collectors, who however, as the days went on, seemed to have somewhat exhausted their interest or their resources. Fontana's engraving and the two drawings came on late in the sale. The first was properly enough described in the catalogue, but the far more interesting pen drawing was only noticed as 'a spirited battlepiece with a soldier pointing a gun, &c.' (this being none other than Alviano himself, whose arm happens to come in line with a cannon), while the 'falling horseman' appeared under the amazing title of 'the Conversion of Saul.'* Their true character being thus concealed, none but the present Keeper of the prints in the British Museum was keen-sighted enough to detect their importance; but as he could not obtain in time the necessary authorisation for their purchase, the writer was able to secure the two drawings and the engraving for a very moderate sum, happy so far to restore these relics of Titian's earliest lost, and perhaps greatest, picture to their proper relation; as in the narrative he has given he hopes to have done something towards identifying its subject, and elucidating its history.†

* A second 'Conversion,' if Sir Joshua be right.

† I have not burdened my pages with references, as the quotations can easily be verified. Those from official documents are given in Cadorin's *Annotations*, and in Ciani's *Storia*, p. 298. We must await the result of Sig. Cavalcaselle's more recent researches. Guicciardini gives the fullest account of the battle of any general historian. A copy of the official report in Sanuto (not in Muratori) was shown me in MS. at Cadore.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REST OF THE STORY, AND THE OTHER VECELLI.

Maximilian's second raid upon Cadore—Battle of Vallesella—Surrender of Bottestagno—Ruin and peace—The Vecelli: Francesco, Orazio, Cesare, Tizianello, and the 'Orator'—Famines, pestilence, and domestic difficulties—Davila at Cadore—Landslips from the Antelao—Degeneracy—Massena—Austrian rule—Cadore's first deputy to the Italian Parliament.

WE must follow what remains of the history of Cadore during the lifetime of Titian, or we shall not understand all that Cadore meant to the heart of her greatest son. We must show for how long a time the Vecelli family were noted, both in the annals of art, and in the humbler records of their native country, or we shall not do justice to his lineage. And then a few incidents from its story up to the present time, will so far complete our task.

We left Cadore in the hour of victory; it was only a brief deliverance. Maximilian, signally foiled twice in the same year in his onslaught upon Venice, revenged himself before its close by joining, on the 10th of December, that League of Cambrai in which the Kings of France and Spain, the Italian Princes, and the Pope, were allied for the destruction of the Republic.

Of the woes to follow, Cadore received intimation through divers portents; the most affecting being that an image of the Madonna, 'on the left hand as you go from Domegge to Lozzo, became every evening as red as blood, changing afterwards to the whiteness of snow.' The most serene Republic had probably more explicit information of the impending danger. When the war broke out, the Emperor's part lay almost entirely among our mountains. The following summer he entered Belluno from Trent, and thus cut off Cadore from Venetian help; but the spirit of the little country rose to the occasion, and one of its citizens, Costantini, by brave counsel and the liberal proffer of his wealth, became the soul of its resistance. Maximilian's troops, 8,000 strong with 14 cannon, starting from Belluno marched up the Piave to Longarone, and then imitating the recent manœuvre of Alviano ascended the defile leading to the Val di Zoldo, and climbed from Forno the self-same pass that had led the Venetians to victory. The Cadorini, however, were not to be caught napping as their foes had been, and attacking the Germans on their descent near Cibiana, fought them for two days, till forced to give way before numbers and discipline. Yet the invaders could only accomplish a raid after all. The castles of Pieve and Bottestagno held out gallantly, and the Cadorini militia could not be driven out of their mountain fastnesses.

But within a few months the hurricane of invasion shifted to the east; for the Prince of Hainault finding

Friuli rather too hot for him, came pouring over Mauria, hoping to surprise Pieve and its castle. But communication with Venice was now open, and the Signory, aware of the danger, had despatched two noted captains, Da Prate and Corso, with troops from Padua to the rescue. These had just reached Pieve, when, in the middle of the night, a scout came in, announcing that Hainault, having crossed the pass, was moving down upon Lorenzago. Immediately pushing on their forces, in company with the Cadorini militia, the Venetians by daylight occupied Vallesella, about three miles from Pieve, at which moment Domegge, already in possession of the enemy, burst out in flames. At Vallesella, therefore, the two commanders strongly posted themselves, throwing forward the Cadorini a little to their right upon the sides of a hill. The Prince on his part advancing through drifting smoke and morning mists, found himself suddenly confronted by an unexpected force, and for a moment wavered. At the instant the Venetians charged, while the Cadorini rushed down upon his flank. A total defeat ensued, 800 Germans fell upon the field, and the rest, abandoning arms and baggage, fled the way they came. Thus a third time within a few months was Cadore saved.

The year 1510 passed in desultory warfare upon all their borders, particularly in attempts by the Venetians, aided by the Cadorini, to recover Belluno, which were at last successful. 1511 was the saddest year of all.

Belluno and Feltre were retaken by the troops of Maximilian advancing from Trent, and the whole of the Val di Mel was delivered up to fire and sword. Then, established in the first-named city, the imperial general made great preparations for the siege of Treviso, intending to float his siege matériel down the Piave upon rafts. But in this he was thwarted by the courage of the raftmen, chiefly Cadorini. About ten miles below Belluno, suddenly raising a pre-concerted cry, they set fire to the vast mass, and sending it masterless down the stream, fled themselves to the mountains.

Maximilian, as his manner was, vowed a bloody vengeance, and despatched Regendorf through the Pusterthal, with orders to force his way southwards, burning every Cadore village, and exterminating the inhabitants. Again rock-perched Bottestagno was attacked, and this time, after a bombardment of two days, the Venetian captain, much to the disgust of 200 Cadorini who formed part of the garrison, surrendered it to the enemy. With it the whole of the Ampezzo fell into Maximilian's hands, the inhabitants proving far from loyal to the Cadore commonwealth, and, as it was now October, Regendorf, satisfied for the present, retired into his Pusterthal quarters. Urged, however, by fresh orders from the furious Kaiser, reckless of winter snows or any other obstacle, he threw himself in December again upon the now undefended country, and penetrating to Pieve, captured the castle after a

two days' siege. The garrison, as before, had surrendered upon terms, but upon this occasion they were soon broken. The place was sacked and burnt, and the male prisoners were hanged. Then, after ravaging the whole country, the brutal Regendorf descended the defile of the Piave, captured the last stronghold of the Cadorini near Longarone, and reached Belluno, which, after the disaster with the rafts had been abandoned by the Germans. Here, however, upon news of a succouring Venetian army, he hastily fell back, re-ascended the defile, and presently evacuated Cadore itself, probably too much desolated to afford comfortable winter-quarters. He carried with him all he could, including the charters and registers hitherto stored in the little church of the castle, and these he lodged in Bottestagno. Then he repaired to his master holding court at Villach in Carinthia, but Maximilian finding Cadore to be still unconquered, drove him from his presence, rating him soundly for his failure. It was the last attempt at conquest of the mountain-girt country.

But though relieved of its enemy Cadore was in miserable plight. The people, coming out of their hiding-places, returned but to the ashes of their villages; and in Pieve itself, after having constructed sheds for immediate shelter, and convoked, for the first time for three sad years, a general council, it sat roofless and forlorn among the blackened ruins of the castle. They elected deputies charged to represent at

Castle of Cluse and Mt. Marmorolo

Venice their deplorable condition, but agreed meanwhile to postpone the repair of their houses, and to set to work vigorously upon the castle, anxious above all things to lodge there a sufficient Venetian garrison. While yet in progress, on April 6, 1512, a truce was concluded between the Emperor and the Venetians, to the immense joy of the poor mountaineers, who had suffered so hardly in the fray. Peace, however, was not finally arranged till 1516, the year when—to connect these scenes with the peaceful painting-room of Titian—it may be remembered, that, upon the death of Bellini, he entered upon the enjoyment of his pension, on condition of painting that 'land battle' of which we now know the subject.

The rebuilding of the villages now proceeded rapidly, and then they took in hand their town house, which, amid great joy, was completed with the suspension, in 1518, of the 'speech bell' (*arringo*) in the tower. It was so called because only sounded on occasion of the assembling of their parliament, now for some years in abeyance. The old bell had perished in the burning of Pieve by the Germans; the new one is that which still swings in the tower, though during the long Austrian occupation its patriotic tongue was silent.

After this terrible war, Cadore had peace till the eagles of Napoleon were seen coming up the defiles from that Val di Mel which was to supply ducal titles —those of Belluno and Feltre—to two of his marshals,

Venice herself fell into apathetic indifference to any high policy, and Cadore so far benefited that she was dragged into no more Imperial quarrels.

But though the events are now of little more than local interest, they entered for a time into the talk of Titian, and they illustrate the life of the mountain community influenced by the gradual progress, or the great disturbances, of European affairs. First, however, we will trace a little further the particular fortunes of the Vecelli.

This remarkable family continued for some time to supply votaries to art. Francesco, Titian's elder brother, claims the first mention. Though actively engaged in the Venetian military service during the war of the League, he appears to have always served at a distance from his native country, to which he returned only in the latter years of his life, when he had well-nigh abandoned art as well as arms. However much he might excel in isolated efforts, the sustained industry and certainly greater genius of Titian, raised a reputation that always overshadowed and probably disheartened him. Yet several of his works are extant in Venice and elsewhere Of those in his native district, one of the most important was the large picture of the 'Nativity' painted for the now destroyed church of San Giuseppe, in Belluno, and long attributed to Titian himself. Some years ago it was in the possession of Sig. Panti of Fonzazo, a village not far from Feltre. I have not been able to learn whether it is still there. For Longarone

he painted a picture of St. Jerome, since lost. At Pieve di Cadore, the picture in the choir of the church, of the Virgin with SS. Sebastian and Rocco, usually considered, and I think with truth, to be the Genova picture of Titian, is assigned by some to the hand of Francesco. But that which possessed the greatest fame in these parts was the great altar-piece executed in 1524 for the church of San Vito, on the Ampezzo frontier of Cadore. The ghost of it may still be seen there; most of the figures have been cruelly daubed over, leaving only some of the heads and the general arrangement to suggest its original state. From the formal curtained-up arrangement of the background, he seems to have lacked the eye of his greater brother for free spaces and the poetry of Nature, but some of the figures are not without dignity and grace. There is a singular duality in the composition. St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist stand right and left of the Madonna, and two mitred bishop-saints pair off on either side behind them. Two little boy angels flutter above, and two amuse themselves below; but these last, fortunately almost entirely obscured by the altar ornaments, have suffered worse treatment than any other figures in the picture. The chief interest of the work arises from the statement that it so much excited the jealousy of Titian as to lead him thenceforth to discourage his brother's use of the brush—a questionable statement; anyway, their brotherly intercourse does not seem to have been chilled. Titian's intro-

duction of his brother's noble old head in the picture for the family chapel is one pleasant indication of it, and there is another on the part of Francesco. Several years later than the date of the San Vito picture, he offered a design to Serravalle for the intended altar-piece, which, not being approved, he proposed his renowned brother for the work, and was thus instrumental in obtaining for the place that grand picture, of which, and the subsequent squabbles with the church authorities about the payment, I have spoken in the second chapter. Francesco not only managed the negotiation for Titian, but the sum in dispute was eventually lodged in his hands.

At Cadore, where Francesco took up his residence soon after the year 1524, he devoted himself entirely to commercial pursuits, of the nature of which we gain some inkling from an extant document dated 1527, in which the council of Cadore solicits for him from the Republic the privilege of importing grain from Treviso, where it appears he owned, or rented, some corn land. But his chief occupation was with the timber trade, having obtained, through the interest of his brother with the Emperor, permission to fell timber in Tyrol and remove it across the frontier, with remission of half the duty. Yet he was never rich, and even lapsed into embarrassments, which compelled him to dispose of some of the family property. Perhaps something of his ill success might be due to the multiplicity of his engagements, for he was a leading member of the Ca-

dore council, and served many public offices, among them that of director of the mines; and he was frequently despatched to Venice on business with the government. At last, in the year 1560, at the age of eighty-five, and under the roof that sheltered his birth, the old soldier, artist, corn dealer, timber merchant, and town councillor, ended his chequered but always honourable career.

Orazio, Titian's artist son, tended his uncle Francesco during his last illness, and followed him to the grave; after which, the business affairs of his father being much in his hands, he frequently resided in Cadore, where he repurchased the property that through the uncle's difficulties had passed from the family. Business more than art occupied his time. He took up Francesco's timber trade, and contracted to supply what was wanted for the bridge at Murano, becoming so much a citizen of Cadore that he sat as a member of the general council. His pictures are sometimes difficult to distinguish from his father's, at least such is the opinion of some authorities. I should not have judged so from the two or three claimed by Cadore. For Calalzo, a village three miles from Pieve, he painted upon the doors of a reliquiary four subjects—'The Annunciation,' 'Nativity,' 'Circumcision,' and the 'Adoration of the Magi.' The still existing receipt he gave for payment bears date Feb. 4, 1566. When the old church was destroyed, the doors were placed as pictures in a small chapel of S. Biagio, but were finally

removed to the new parochial church which took its place, where they now decorate the choir. To me they appeared to partake more of the sober Flemish style than of Venetian richness, and certainly could make no pretensions to Titian splendour. For Pieve he copied the great banner painted by his father. What had become of the original does not appear; and the copy, if it be the same as that preserved in the chapel of the Barnabo family at Domegge, must have been vilely dealt with since. Two pictures, one of 'Adonis,' the other of the 'Virgin,' he presented to his relative Tiziano Vecelli of Cadore, mention of which being omitted in the will of the latter, they were, after his death, abstracted and turned into money by his trustees. These few facts sum up Orazio's connection with Cadore. As for Pomponio, the only and the characteristic record is that of his having sold all the Cadore property.

Art ran strongly in the veins of the Vecelli. Several others of the name, incited probably by the fame of the one great Vecellio, became painters. Of these, if not the most able, certainly the most widely known, was Cesare Vecellio, who, with his brother Fabrizio, early entered the studio of Titian their cousin. Fabrizio died young. Cesare continued closely attached to his master and relative, travelling with him into Germany, and acting as his secretary. There are more pictures of his in the Cadore district than of any other of the family; all facile in design, correct in drawing, but poor in thought, hasty in execution, and

feeble in colouring; works thoroughly conventional. At the same time, the unsatisfactory condition to which, in common with greater works, they have been reduced either by smoke and dirt, or the more fatal smartening process set on foot by zealous 'churchwardens,' must be allowed to put them at a disadvantage. The 'Last Supper' and the two large pictures celebrating the relations between Cadore and Venice, all in the church at Pieve, have been already referred to in describing that edifice. The two latter works have so much the character of mediocre scene-painting, that one may charitably hope they were prepared in haste for some public celebration. Two pictures of the Virgin, in one of which she is accompanied by SS. Lucia and Apollonia, in the other by SS. Rocco and Sebastian, are at Domegge. The former was originally painted for the interesting little church of the Molina. For Ceneda he painted the latter subject over again, with a portrait of the donor, Sarcinello, whom we may presume to have been Titian's son-in-law. The church at Tai has one of his best pictures, and the chapel of the Crocefisso, between Tai and Pieve, possesses one of his usual type. It is possible that my criticism upon his pictures may have been rendered unduly severe from the inevitable comparison between himself and his great relation and namesake; and if indeed the eighteen 'palco' pictures at Lentiai (spoken of, p. 56) are by him, his merits are much greater than his Cadore works would lead one to suppose. They display so

much ability that I cannot but suspect a superior hand in his assistant Costantini of Valle.

Cesare Vecellio, however, is principally known as a designer in wood, and in connection with two works, the 'Ancient Costumes' and the 'Designs for Lace.' These were not his only attempts of the kind, and, to protect them from piracy, he obtained a decree of the Venetian senate. He was unfortunate in an enemy of his own house—a nephew at Pieve,—against whose practices he received a guarantee of protection from the Cadore council, perhaps in return for his handsome present of pictures. He died in 1600 at an advanced age.

Four other painters, all flourishing at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century, bore the charmed name of Vecelli. Marco and Tizianello were father and son. The first, a son of Titian's eminent cousin at Cadore, was a great favourite with the master, and became very popular in Venice as a portrait painter. One of his works, a Madonna, is said to be still extant in San Floriano, in the Val di Zoldo. He died in 1611. His son, called Tizianello, though a skilful artist, of which proof remains in the church of Quero, below Belluno, is more distinguished as the reputed author of the anonymous 'Life of Titian,' dedicated to Lady Arundel. Tommaso was a pupil of Marco, but being in delicate health, returned to live among his native mountains, and to him is attributed a picture of the Redeemer, painted for the town

house of Pieve, and a banner representing St. Anthony, painted for Candide. Ettore, grandnephew of Cesare, closes the list of artist Vecelli. He is best known through certain copperplate engravings from his designs.

But the most important member of the family after Titian, and bearing the same name, was not an artist. A son of that cousin of Titian's who so distinguished himself in the war, he succeeded to his father's place of influence in the councils of his native country, having abandoned practice in the Venetian courts as an advocate for that purpose. He was a deputy, and at different times chancellor, syndic, and consul, whatever that might mean, and was despatched on most missions of importance to the Venetian government. Sometimes he led his countrymen in the field, as when, on the old contested pass of the Misurina, he repulsed some bands of Tyrolese, for which service he was rewarded with the order of knighthood by the Doge. He is more often, however, styled the 'orator' or pleader, than 'cavaliere,' the democratic Cadorini eschewing all titles, and eventually forbidding any native to accept a patent of nobility.

With this personage is connected a mighty local disturbance, in which Titian himself became somewhat implicated. It began in the year 1570, with the ambition of Oderico Soldano, who, son of Titian's brother-in-law of the same name, the husband of his sister Catarina, was thus nephew to the painter. As a notary

or lawyer, he was very prominent in Cadore affairs, and the chief rival of 'the Orator.' In contravention of an ancient law he had been, while holding the office of chancellor, elected governor of the great centuria of Domegge, which village seems to have been generally disposed to flout Pieve when occasion offered. The grand council sitting at the latter place, took up the matter with a high hand led by 'the Orator,' and despatched the captain of the Pieve militia with a large body of men to Domegge to levy a fine of fifty ducats for the offence, and to enforce the banishment of Soldano within three days if he remained contumacious. This march of armed men over the five miles between the two villages had too much the awful seeming of civil war not to move deeply the hearts of all good Cadorini. The tumult was great, and was increased by the adherence of the Venetian patrician in command of the castle—a Contarini—to the cause of Soldano. Finally, a deputation, headed by the 'Orator,' went to Venice to accuse the latter before the ducal throne. But now the old painter, the most illustrious of Cadore citizens, and far from chilled by his ninety years of age, stood forward vehemently in his nephew's cause, using all his influence with the government, and despatching a letter of hot censure to the Cadore council.* The suit went on however, and, three years afterwards, the enemies of Soldano obtained a formal condemnation of

* Still preserved in a collection of documents belonging to Signor Galeazzi at Valle.

Domegge, which he as chancellor was forced to read from a window to the people at Pieve. He read it, then throwing the paper contemptuously on the ground left the chamber, but returned presently with five or six armed men, and violently abused the presiding official. We need not follow the commotion further than to say, that Soldano, supported by Contarini and aided at Venice by his uncle, proved at last too many for his adversaries and was established in the disputed office.

Tiziano Vecelli, 'the Orator,' was also a poet, and among other literary remains are three epigrams on the death of the beautiful Irene of Spilemberg, whom the greater Tiziano had immortalised with his pencil. He died about 1610, aged 72.

Titian's loans to his countrymen for the purchase of corn have been referred to in the fourth chapter. They were occasioned by the severe famines to which Cadore, after the war, was for several years subject, and to provide against which public granaries were established. Titian gave other assistance too, in this distress, by obtaining leave for the council to purchase as much corn as they needed in the Ceneda district. The diversion of these granary funds to other purposes was often complained of, but upon one occasion, by universal consent, a sum of money was abstracted by the council to help in redeeming a native of Pieve from slavery among the Turks—a common fate then for those that went to sea. It will be observed that,

mountaineers as they were, the Cadorini were thoroughly commercial, a taste no doubt fostered by their connection with Venice. Several members of Cadore families that had suffered in the war settled in the Levant as traders; and the Coletti, one of the most ancient, and still of note in Pieve, owns representatives at this day in Greece, whose ancestors emigrated in the early part of the sixteenth century.

Famines were not the only disasters to which the country was subject. Pestilence frequently showed itself on their borders, sometimes on the side of Germany, sometimes from the Italian plains; and, on these occasions, great efforts were made to keep it out by a very strict cordon. All the passes were guarded, no pastures were allowed to be let to strangers, and conversation even with inhabitants of infected districts was forbidden. In 1631, however, the plague, after devastating Lombardy, broke through the cordon, and carried off five persons from one household in Valle. Not losing heart, the council planted armed guards round the tainted dwelling, with orders to shoot anyone issuing from the doors, and the stern measure seems to have succeeded.

Very calamitous too, though perhaps wholesomely purifying, were the conflagrations which destroyed village after village, wooden built as they were, and often the churches with them. In this way many ancient records and early frescoes perished.

It is curious to observe how the difficulties and

policy of great empires find their counterpart in this remote little country. They were no strangers in their small way to the troublesome relations between church and state, and were equally determined with some of their great neighbours to keep the pretensions of the former within bounds. By the laws of the country no priest was permitted to interfere in any question between the church and the people; such cases were strictly reserved for the civil courts. And priest in this matter included patriarch. Two or three attempts of this potentate to adjudicate in parish disputes agitated the assembly during the sixteenth century. The council absolutely forbad any parties to appear before either the patriarch or his delegate in such mixed ecclesiastical cases; and meeting with difficulty in dealing with the patriarchal vicar upon this point, appealed to the Venetian Government, who, always hostile to church claims, gave prompt decision in their favour, and amply confirmed the ancient statutes.

Political economy was of course, in those days, understood at Cadore much as it was elsewhere. The first attempt to float squared timber down the Piave was violently opposed by the owners of carts and horses, and at last the Council of Ten at Venice had to step in and mediate, ordaining that, out of every 100 loads, the carriers should transport 30. A curious specimen of the wisdom of that day, but such as might be matched perhaps in days more recent.

Amidst such minor disturbances the sixteenth cen-

tury, which had seen Cadore in its greatest glory and its greatest humiliation, came to an end. In the early part of the seventeenth there was again alarm of war, which in the first instance arose from aggressions on the frontier by the people of the Prince Bishop of Brixen, a dignitary of peculiar and extensive jurisdiction in Italian Tyrol. Later, a more serious danger arose from the apprehended hostility to Venice of the Emperor Ferdinand II. Supplies of arms were sent up, levies made, the passes put in charge of special officers, beacon fires were laid ready, and watch and ward kept day and night on the summits of the hills; while, with excellent forethought, the entire military defence of the country was committed to the famous Davila, soldier and historian, who lived for two years—1617–18—in a house upon the piazza at Pieve, and took his seat in the council. During his stay in Cadore, he wrote a description of the castle for the Venetian Government, and, according to tradition, employed his leisure in the composition of his great work, the 'History of the Civil Wars in France.'

In 1638 war threatened between Venice and her ancient foe the Turk. Cadore, always excused from military service beyond her confines, was yet called upon for contributions, and, as before, proposed to make these in timber; the people glorying in the thought that their native pines should swim in Turkish waters. Their liberality and long proved fidelity were rewarded in 1663, when Cadore remonstrated against a toll levied

upon all the streams of the Venetian mainland, and which of course affected the Piave. A special edict exempted thenceforth 'the waters which those faithful subjects, in defence of their country and of Venice, had tinged with their blood. This edict was respected during even the Austrian occupation. Soon afterwards the castle, was in great part destroyed in one of the terrible fires which still afflicted the country, but was immediately restored at the expense of the Republic.

The eighteenth century opened with a singular peril to the little state. A Count Adami, whose family, linked in marriage with the Vecelli, had been long settled in Pieve, formed a plot for withdrawing Cadore from its allegiance and handing it over to Bavaria, to which country his wife belonged. Summoned to Venice on suspicion, he disappeared in the terrible dungeons of the Council of State. At this time, too, the usual Alpine disasters were particularly severe. Auronzo suffered from a fire which deprived 150 families of their habitations, and which two years' remission of taxation did not make good. Laggio, with other villages on that side of the Piave, were almost destroyed in a tremendous thunderstorm, which set them in a blaze; and, in 1708, such an inundation swept through the valleys, that Perarolo, where the waters of the two streams met, remained for a long time, as the people said in their appeal for help, 'like a bare bone without flesh or skin.'

But the most frightful calamity from natural causes

in the whole history of Cadore occurred in 1726, when Chiapuzza, one of the villages on the western slope of the Antelao, was destroyed by a landslip in which 500 persons perished; by a second, ten years afterwards, a neighbouring village shared the same fate, and the crowded population of the district began to understand the peril in which they lived from the crumbling fabric of the mountain on that side. A dreadful reminder occurred again in 1814, when two villages and 200 people were destroyed; but the dangerous slope, as the traveller on the Ampezzo road may see, is still covered with hamlets; though, as he may also note, another village, so lately as August 1868, has received similar awful burial.

And now the long contest between France and Austria began ominously to affect Cadore. In the brief war of 1733, Austria, by consent of the Republic, and to meet her enemy in Lombardy, marched 5,000 men, under command of the Duke of Würtemburg, through the defiles of Cadore, which thus for the first time saw the white-coated soldiery of her ancient foe. And along with this symptom of the great changes impending, it is curious to observe how the fatal moral and political decay of the eighteenth century showed itself even in Cadore. The public institutions were more and more carelessly administered; the public debt increased; the public school was almost abandoned, since the richer members of the community being able to educate their sons in the cities of the Venetian plain,

were selfishly indifferent to the education of the poor Peculation and extravagance went hand in hand; and, no longer worthy of them, the country lost also its material advantages, as their iron mines could not be worked for want of the fuel which no forethought had been exercised to preserve.

Some few Cadorini distinguished themselves elsewhere. Among them we read of a Gonzago of Perarolo, who supported after a fashion the art reputation of his country by achieving the dignity of court painter to the Empress Catherine at St. Petersburg. And there was a Nardeo, a descendant of a notary of that name, who, in 1562, received his patent from Titian, who became somewhat noted as a soldier under Frederick the Great. That he had taken service with the great adversary of the house of Austria is perhaps significant of the enmity with which that house was instinctively regarded in Cadore.

But in the overturning of all things old which now approaches, and in which Cadore was to take her part, Ciani my guide through all these centuries suddenly deserts me. He closes his work with the close of the Venetian dispensation,* and does not even relate the manner of it. We learn however, from other sources,

* This worthy son of Cadore—a canon of Ceneda—was amongst the few Italian clerics who declared against the temporal power of the Pope. He was in consequence forbidden, by the bishop of his diocese, the exercise of any ecclesiastical function, and died soon afterwards, in the spring of 1867.

his life if he would petition for it, and upon refusal was hanged at Mantua, that fatal spot for patriots. Coletti, after long imprisonment, returned in quieter days to Cadore, where he still lives, occupying the house once decorated with the arabesques of Titian.

In 1864 the insurrection of Friuli circled round to Cadore, and dispersed itself among its mountains. In 1866 an Austrian detachment, 1,100 strong, came down from Sappada upon Cadore, but was met at the Tre Ponti by 300 Cadore volunteers, who, supplied with arms by 'underground' methods from Padua, had been for some time secretly drilled in their use. After a smart fight the Austrians retreated. Before the year was out Cadore recorded an enthusiastic vote in favour of annexation to the kingdom of Italy, and proceeded to elect a deputy to the Italian Parliament. The choice, if not a very wise one, was yet creditable to the patriotic feeling of the people.

On one of our journeys to Cadore we entered its territory from the west, ascending the blithe and beautiful Val di Fiorentina, to cross by the Forcella Forada under the precipices of the Pelmo, into the valley of the Boita. While halting for an hour at the small inn of Pescul, the last village in the vale, two priests came in, the one in hearty comfortable case as concerned both the inner and the outer man; the other, tall, gaunt, 'distrait,' and forlornly shabby. The first ordered dinner, the latter sat leaning moodily on his staff, till suddenly apprehending that we were English

The Tre Ponti

he started from his seat, and approached us with lively gesticulations and a torrent of welcomes. 'You are English—English—see! here are some of my poems; take them, O take them to noble England!' Perplexed at the appeal, and uncertain of its character, we hesitated, at the same time privily displaying a coin or two to our friend's companion, who signalled a vehement negative, while he significantly touched his forehead. So then our poor applicant was mad! Not quite however, though his gratitude at our acceptance of the soiled scraps, printed at Belluno, which contained his effusions, political odes and sonnets for the most part, betrayed excitement enough. 'You will tell them of me in England; I shall be heard of in England,' he said, clasping his hands together in tearful ecstasy. When we left he accompanied us a few yards and then, with an altered manner, and pointing to his forehead he said: 'I was in prison three years, and have never been well since.' It was true: a Talamini, one of the most distinguished families of Cadore, he was professor of rhetoric at Venice when, in 1848, the city achieved its brief deliverance, and, enthusiastic in the cause, Talamini joined Manin in its protracted defence. When all was over he fell into the hands of the Austrians, and underwent a sentence of imprisonment, from which he issued wrecked in intellect but unchilled in heart, retiring to his native mountains and residing at Valle, where his disordered brain busied itself in schemes of social regeneration, and in pouring forth

poetical rhapsodies. Meanly dressed as any mendicant, yet not really deficient in means, he wandered about the mountains, an object of deep but silent respect to the people — how deep, was shown the moment they were free and called upon to send their deputy to Florence, when the poor, passion-worn man was their unanimous choice. He held the office but a few months, and then resigned it into more practical hands.

With this act Cadore took her place in the kingdom of Italy, while in the person of her deputy—a Cadorino, but a citizen and a defender of Venice—she recognised her old relations with the City of the Sea.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN AND ABOUT CADORE.

Life at Tai—The Roccoli—Church of the 'Crocefisso'—Chapel of S. Dionisio—Destruction of Cancia—Churches of the 'Difesa' at San Vito and Vigo — Vinigo and its Titian — Titian's Madonna children—Eremites of Monte Cridola—Monte Vedorchia and its circle of dolomites.

AFTER the long digression of the three last chapters—which yet was no digression from our proper subject, though it led us into dim history and an art controversy—let us return to the little inn at Tai.

A fortnight made us well at home in Cadore, and we almost daily trod the footpath through the fields behind Titian's house. It was generally pleasanter to make that circuit to the town, for the road was apt to be dusty, a wind sweeping up daily from below and making it one long dust cloud. But at evening the dew and stillness fell together, and a glorious moon leaping late from behind the jagged ridges of the Cridola flooded all with light. Then the Cadore folks swarmed out, chattering down the smooth white terrace of a road, to learn what news might stir at Tai, their one link with the great world. And Tai was a busy place. All day great wains, laden with sawn timber that had crossed the Ampezzo out of Tyrol,

came creaking down. All day they were returning, toiling up the zigzag gradients, carrying sacks of flour, casks of wine, or packets of groceries; their huge broad wheels flattening for a moment the dust raised by teams of six, eight, or ten horses apiece. Many rested for the night at our inn, starting in the starlight morning with a cruel clatter. All baited for an hour or two, and generally had a job the while for the blacksmith over the way; a spare fellow who, with two or three assistants, kept up an inharmonious din from morning till night.

But the busiest man at Tai was our 'major domo;'—it was long before we understood that the fat, easy man lounging about the door was the real landlord; these Italian inns seem generally furnished with two or three. The acting sub, straight as a dart, brown as a berry, was everywhere at once—upstairs and downstairs, in doors and out, and always sending his stentorian voice before him. Now he was hauling a sack from the landing, now helping to unload a waggon, now trotting an extra horse to a cart in difficulties on the hill, now quelling an obstreporous teamster, and anon taking a turn with the cook in the kitchen. He was never quiet except at certain serious moments when ensconced with his account-book in a dark corner at the foot of the staircase. As for the master—miller, baker, shopkeeper, timber merchant and publican—Giovanni Tommas will be a rich man if he is as well served in the first

four trades as he is in the last. The shop, a general store for groceries—*coloniali*—was great in sweetmeats. The wife and daughters of 'John Thomas' looked after that, and for the evening gossip it was the grand resort of the Cadore quality, although a neighbouring *merceria* for drapery goods somewhat shared their attentions. Chairs were grouped about the doors of each, and smoke and talk and the sucking of sweets went on into the night.*

Meanwhile as twilight deepened, suddenly on every mountain side, and high up close under the stars, shone out bright sparkling star-like lights, that gleamed for an hour and then died into darkness. They were the supper-fires of the wild-hay cutters resting from their perilous toil, and preparing *polenta* before turning in for the night to those *baite* which are the sole memorial of the Cadore aborigines. We never tired of watching these rather mysterious lights, shining briefly aloft—above the woods, above the sloping pastures, above many a ghostly precipice, up where they say the vestiges remain of those retreats that sheltered refugees from Attila, and from oft-repeated German raids.

The great means of locomotion at Cadore are light single-horse phaetons, which in the evening came spinning home on every road. A horseman is quite unknown. At Tai, however, there was one velocipede,

* It should be said that the inn at Tai is now much improved, considerably enlarged and better furnished.

always plying in the cool hours on the easy sweeps of the Strada Allemagna; and this, a vehicle supposed to be peculiarly English, was for the time an object of immense curiosity, and the chief public entertainment of the place. The great amusement however, or occupation, or staple trade—whatever it might be called—was bird-catching, and the Cadore country can certainly not be properly described without mention of its *roccoli*.

On every bluff, knoll, or grassy swell appears a circular trellis-work, composed of thickly intertwisted hornbeam or beech. One might suppose them intended for bowers of repose, but that their number is out of all proportion to any possible amount of *dolce far niente*. They are in fact bird decoys, though the precise mystery of the craft we never unravelled. They did not seem much in use at that season, and looked too luxuriously secluded to be disturbed. The piping of feathered prisoners could be heard sometimes, but that was all. Plenty of humbler contrivances however for the same end occupied the fields, and were simple enough, consisting generally of poles stuck in a circle, with pegs smeared with birdlime for branches, decoy-cages below, and an operator at the end of a string behind a bush. I once caught a priest with his long black legs tucked under him eagerly watching his cages in the morning air, and it struck me the reverend gentleman was hungry for his breakfast. When we inquired what sort of birds they caught, the reply was 'all sorts,' though the *Beccacroce*,

crossbeak, is, I believe, the legitimate game. But they are clearly not particular. The little things appeared at table about the size of walnuts, brown, richly flavoured, and each dished upon a sage leaf. We shrewdly suspect that among ignominious 'all sorts' we may have even done some robin wrong.

About half way between Tai and Pieve at a turn of the road, stands the far-seen campanile of a small church, with a house or two. A large fresco on the church front portrays the landscape round the spot, and a pair of ploughing oxen on their knees before a crucifix, which is being disinterred from the soil. As the stranger stands and stares, a grave man with two or three weighty keys in his hand will step from the door of the adjoining house, and motion towards the church, where he proceeds to light certain lamps; a peasant woman or two, scenting what is going on, will rush in and kneel, a curtain behind the altar is withdrawn, and a life-size figure in dark wood of the crucified Saviour, startling in its realism, is displayed—the more startling since from the bowed and bleeding head there hangs human hair.

The story is that, in the year 1540, or some say earlier, as certain husbandmen were ploughing in the adjoining field, their oxen suddenly fell on their knees, and could be urged no further. Fetching their mattocks a chest was soon dug out, and when opened it revealed this curious object. It was immediately conveyed to the church close by, at that time dedicated to

S. Antonio, and the following day in solemn procession to the archdiaconal church in Pieve. Next morning, however, it was found again—a very possible circumstance without the intervention of miracle—in the little church of S. Antonio, which thenceforward became its permanent home.

The crucifix of Valcalda, as the place is called, rose speedily into much renown, and in 1630, when a pestilence raged in the country, many persons kneeling before it in deprecation of the divine anger saw drops of blood rolling from the forehead to the floor. The priests in charge were summoned, and the blood and soil were carefully scraped up. After this, the pestilence gradually ceasing, 'it was evident to all that by the blood shed from his image the Redeemer had appeased his Father's wrath.' Not long after, three shining stars were seen to issue from the mouth and circle round the figure; upon which additional miracle the crucifix was, in 1668, raised to its present place behind the high altar, and the church, discarding S. Antonio, took the name of 'Santissimo Crocefisso.

Many dignitaries of the church recognised from time to time the virtues of the crucifix of Valcalda; and, in 1731, an Archbishop of Milan came on pilgrimage up the difficult mountain ways to the humble Cadorian shrine. Of course, too, miraculous power continued to issue from the holy image, principally however in the peculiar direction of bringing still-born babes to life, or sufficiently so to allow of baptism.

Nearly forty of such cases are recorded. Among others of a different kind may be noted that of a noble Venetian and former captain of Cadore and his wife, who, in 1710, were besieged by the Turks in Corfu, and registered a vow that, if delivered from the peril, they would make pilgrimage to the distant mountain chapel. The vow was accepted, and here in due time they came, the lady on her bare knees making the circuit of the building. Naturally, in such a neighbourhood, vows made in mining difficulties appear in the list. Twice it was when drought afflicted the country. Upon one of these occasions, when its guardians were about to stretch forth their hands to the crucifix to bear it reverently round the fields, a sudden darkness and a tremendous rain rendered the pious act unnecessary. In some of these instances we see reflected the country and the time; all show the importance to the Cadore people of their strangely acquired crucifix.

What was its history? That it was really found in the fields there seems no reason to doubt. That it had been buried at some time of terror is easy to believe; and the invasion of the Visigoths under Alaric in 410 A.D., of the Huns under Attila in 432 A.D., of the defeat of the Franks of Charlemagne by the Hungarians in this neighbourhood, when it is suggested they may have buried the crucifix of the troop in their flight, have all been urged as likely occasions, though indeed such were not few. Yet the style of the workmanship, and the attitude of the figure argue a later date than any

of these. Ciani attributes it to the 14th century, and if so the Maximilian invasion would be the probable occasion of its interment, as the German soldiers on their march to the fatal field would be the likely authors of its concealment. This would account for its being a new discovery in 1540, when the oxen stumbled, let us suppose, over the partially hidden chest. We may add that it must have been a well known shrine to Titian; and that the modern traveller, just at the turn of the road where the campanile of the Crocefisso comes into view across the valley, will find an oratory with a picture of the 'Invention' to bespeak his immediate attention to the circumstance.

No one can be long at Cadore without noticing, on the top of a high conical hill close under the Antelao, a small white object, soon made out to be a chapel, just such an one as going eastward into the Carinthian valleys you will find crowning the hills by scores; relics, they say, of Sclavonic pagan worship. This chapel, which has a droll resemblance to a little white kitten sitting up aloft, is dedicated to S. Dionisio; and one Sunday, preferring the sweet silence of the hills alike to the close, incense-laden atmosphere and meagre service of the parish church, and to the busy clatter of the roadside inn, we determined to visit his shrine. The necessary inquiries only brought forth the 'guide' we had hoped to dispense with, and whom we privately intended to send back so soon as the route had

sufficiently disclosed itself. But we had not long started before a second individual was seen stealing through the woods, and it was soon clear the two had agreed to be our companions for the day. It is a three hours' climb, but we made it four, for the day was hot, and above the pine woods the Alp was steep and shadeless; and we dined moreover on the way—dined at a little rivulet of water, that was darting and delving hither and thither amongst the thick bilberry scrub; and had many a halt besides, each at some point of higher vantage as we rose above the world. Now on this side, now on that, the valleys of the Piave and the Boita unrolled their winding lengths below, green, and yellow, and red, and white, and blue—green and yellow in the pastures and corn crops, red and white in the roofs and walls of hamlets, and in scarred watercourses, blue in the depths, and the receding woodlands.

When the first shoulders of the hills were surmounted, and the bright valley scene was gone, there stepped forth to greet us the solemn company of mountains that keep Cadore in on every side, and that, after the manner of dolomite, took from moment to moment new and startling shapes upon the blue sky. Further on, the path skirted the sides of a wide cauldron-shaped hollow, descending into depths unseen; and then passed into one of those basins of Alpine verdure, where, keen and fresh, the wind sweeps down from glacier heights, and where, though no beauty is, save that of green grass and flying shadows, the lightsome air is health itself.

The flanks of the final hill, here covered with bilberry bushes, were now before us, and threading the narrow precipitous tracks, the near presence of the Antelao announced itself in the blue sheen of ice and snow, piled up above our heads. Then suddenly the hill side was alive with people, for women and children from villages far below were here bilberry gathering, and stared at us with smeared faces. A steeper bit, and we had gained the platform of the little chapel, scarcely larger than the circuit of its walls.

It was a glorious view that, under a glorious noon that day, swept round all points of the horizon, except that occupied by the menacing bulk of the Antelao, of which the Dionisio hill forms in fact an eastern spur. Away northward stretched the fantastic masses of the Marmarolo, though from this near point you would scarce recognise the forms that from Titian's house once seen are not forgotten. Following eastward were the faint billowy shapes of the Carnic Alps, disappearing into Carinthia, and cut off by the nearer, darker, sterner ridges and crest of Monte Cridola, the final buttress of a perfect wall of dolomite, that with a chevaux de frise of spiky peaks, hedges in all the eastern view. This is that extraordinary range, only seen by glimpses from the inhabited parts of Cadore, whose wildness sheltered the two Vecelli in their communications with Alviano. For a general view of them the Dionisio chapel is an admirable point, but I shall presently take the reader nearer. Then southward

appeared the quaint Monte Duranno with its horn, the centre of a series of dolomite slabs,—they are like nothing else, shoved up one behind the other. And then, under the sun, stood forth the Val di Zoldo peaks, merging towards the west in a forest of pinnacles, belonging to the far off Primiero group. And then the bald Civita rose to view, whose crags, among the grandest in the Alps, are here turned from the spectator. The soaring Pelmo fills up the west, and so we come round to the dark impending Antelao again, completing the tale of all the peaks with which Titian was most familiar.

Our two attendants having satisfactorily disposed of themselves for a siesta among the bushes below, we enjoyed an hour of delicious Sunday peace, and gazed our fill. Of the human world, one little patch alone in the Boita valley lay glittering in the sun, precisely the scene of the battle of 1508; and the eye could follow upwards the track of the Venetian army to the Cibiana Col, from which they had descended. The chapel was locked, and we understood that the annual procession on the day of the saint, when only it was opened for mass, had been given up, owing to the frequent disorders that occurred. Our meditations were at last disturbed by the bilberry gatherers, who, wondering probably what the 'forestieri' could be doing up there, suddenly filled the narrow summit, while a lad irreverently climbing the chapel roof, contrived to stir the idle bell in the turret into an unseemly sort of jocular jangling in the thin air.

Not caring to make part of so noisy a congregation, we prepared to descend. Unfortunately the congregation descended also, adding, indeed, some picturesqueness to the scene, as the long straggling line went winding adown the hill, and scattered upon the steep and stony shepherd paths that fell into the great hollow we had skirted in the ascent. Presently, too, a wild-hay cutter came rushing through the throng, with his haystack on a sledge behind him, and guiding the swagging mass down the steep pitches and round the sharp corners at thrilling speed, and with wonderful skill. We let the crowd precede us, and, an hour later, swelling up from the depths, came the orderly tremulous bell notes of the Angelus, far more appropriate to the day and hour than the rollicking bell of the hill. Soon the roofs of the village it belonged to showed by glimpses through the trees — Nebbiu, the little cloud village of Alviano's ambush;—and, before we were aware, we had dropped into the midst of its huddle of houses, and its groups of Sunday loungers. From Nebbiu in its curious nitch, the walk of two miles along the foot of the hills through fields of Indian corn, or bright meadow, was all familiar; but we gave many a backward look at the lonely chapel of Dionisio, shining now a mere speck against the purple dark of the Antelao. During the rest of our stay, we never failed to give it a morning and an evening salutation.

In the fourth chapter I described Comelico and the

Titian picture in remote Candide; I must now ask the reader to accompany me to San Vito at the other extremity of the country, and to a spot in the valley of the Boita, where yet another Titian lies concealed. Upon a late occasion, we took the great Ampezzo road from Tai, passing through Valle through Venas, and through the narrow gorge beyond, where the fortress stood that played a part in the Maximilian war. Some relics of it, I am told, remain, but I have failed to discover them among the precipitous rocks that there close in tightly upon the river.

The road is finely engineered, but at the time of this excursion, at every torrent course it crossed, the bridge was gone or shaky; and above and below a ghastly wreck lay heaped and furrowed as the waters left it one fatal night some six weeks earlier in the August of 1868. All these torrents descend from the Antelao, which now, calm and pale, and pitiless, showed itself at intervals up the lateral glens. It was not till we had cleared the gorge, and advanced some ten miles on the way, that the white course of ruin could be traced distinctly up to the misty cleft from which it broke, and down to the scene of its deadliest devastation—Cancia, a village that was now one grave-mound. The road which passed through it had been dug out twelve feet deep, but at one point the mass of mud and stones had parted, and a single house stood islanded like Rahab's in the midst of fallen Jericho. For the rest there was little else of Cancia to be seen

but ends of timber sticking from the now immovable mass of dolomite debris. One quarter of an hour during a fierce storm that raged among the precipices of the Antelao, had done it all. The roar of the burdened torrent was mingled with the thunder of the tempest as it rushed upon the village. Eleven persons were buried with the houses, and sixty families were rendered homeless.

Yet it was all historically proper, for the road now for miles passed over traces of the similar and worse disasters that have been recorded in a previous chapter. All the ground was scored with dreadful memories, culminating at the point where the landslip of 1814 lay mounded up all across the valley, obliterating the two villages, 200 of whose luckless inhabitants perished. At San Vito the danger was over, for there the Malcora, the Antelao, and the Pelmo sit round the little plateau like giants who condescend to be protecting.

My errand here was to see Francesco's picture, and at first I made for a venerable looking little church hard by the white-washed modern one. The interior, low and heavily groined, was full of frescoes, wherein, all soundless to the ear, and fading fast to sight, a furious fight seemed raging. The sacristan could only say it was the church of La Difesa, and that the struggle among the mailed warriors on the walls represented some unknown 'confusione' among the 'Tedeschi.' Degenerate son of Cadore! Vanity of earthly monuments! This is one of two churches

dating from 1516, erected to commemorate for ever the 'defence' Cadore made against her German foes; and now 'La Difesa' and the pictured walls, are alike a puzzle to its own sacristan!

The sister memorial church is at Vigo, which, though belonging to the other side of the country, may be better here described. From Cadore you must

MONTE ANTELAO, FROM SAN VITO.

ascend the valley of the Piave, and the village is so cunningly folded among the hills at the foot of Monte Cornon, that it is never seen unless you go to look for it; nor then till you are just upon it. But there, in a little basin of meadow, the old houses cluster together, with a large Gothic church amongst them, simple and solemn in its interior, as none of its

modernised neighbours are. And there, in the irregular piazza, is the chapel of St. Ursula (mentioned at p. 152) with all the 11,000 virgins inside, or, as many as the artist could manage to put upon the walls, along with the founder and his wife in their last beds,—the oldest frescoes in the country, unless Cesare's restorations, were very thorough. And there, on a rock above the village, is the chapel of S. Daniele, once gay with frescoes too, that were destroyed only in 1862. And there, beside the maternal parish church aforesaid, locked up and rarely opened, is the diminutive 'Difesa' with its battle pictures, and an inscription, setting forth in an odd mixture of Italian, Latin, and Patois, that 'in December, 1512, the country then withstanding the Tedeschi in evil fortune, the priest and his people vowed to build this *gesia* (sic for *chiesa*) to the praise of the Madonna.' The vow, made in stress of war-time, was fulfilled in happier days. Here, thanks perhaps to a conspicuous legend, which the chapel at San Vito lacks, the people had not forgotten what 'difesa' meant.

Vigo is the village excused from taxes on condition of handing in provisions at the secret door of the castle when under siege; and before leaving it, I should say, that on inquiring for the picture recorded to have been painted by Titian for the church, the villagers pointed out two separate figures of Apostles in the choir; copies, they said, from originals by his hand; which the commune, whether willingly or under pressure, had

presented to the First Napoleon. These figures do not answer to the description of the picture, and I should question the correctness of the story.

But to return to San Vito. The picture by old Francesco, of which Titian is supposed to have been jealous, is in the parish church. I have spoken of it elsewhere, and it is for another purpose that I have brought the reader along this road. We must leave it now to reach that solitary campanile which points out the village of Vinigo, perched upon a ridge, where, though it seems in dangerous proximity to the Antelao, it is really well protected by a higher ridge, which diverts the frequent rock-falls. Titian painted for Vinigo an altarpiece similar to that at Candide, and I made the visit to San Vito serve for ascertaining its fate. We retraced our steps over the dreary tract so often devastated by the mischievous Antelao, and near Vodo struck off upon a good path ascending to the lonely village. It was abruptly steep to the very threshold of the small open space that served for piazza to the dozen or so of red-timbered houses, where our appearance was as that of beings from another world. In a moment the whole village was astir, and we found ourselves encumbered with a very earthy-looking crowd, the centre of a circle of staring eyes and gaping mouths. A dingy sacristan answered at our asking with his keys, and it was clear they knew all about their Titian —nay, they had two Titians—and an unusual week-day congregation soon filled the church, planted apart

on the brow of the steep descent. At the high altar is their historical Titian, at a side one on the right that of local reputation.

There is a strange look about the first which only its strange history explains.* In the course of the last century the parish priest of the time conceived and executed the amazing notion of cutting out all the figures, respecting only the outlines, and re-arranging them on a new canvas, painting in the background also to suit his fancy. The result is an odd mixture of a master's with a meaner hand; the Virgin is seated upon a high throne, with the Child standing in the act of benediction upon her knee; on the steps of the throne sits a boy-angel; on either side stand St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. The two child figures rivet attention. They have all the natural grace with which Titian endowed his children, a grace which is a test of authenticity for these forgotten pictures almost as reliable as the sentiment of the landscape when there is one. Studies of each of his Madonna children would make a charming series, and perhaps none are better than two among the Cadore Titians—that at Pieve, where the child at the breast draws up its little feet in gratified contentment; and that at Zoppè, where laughing on its mother's lap it kicks and crows. The human

* Recorded in a MS. inventory and description of the pictures in the Cadore churches, preserved at the canonica of Pieve. Ticozzi gives the same story in a note, p. 95.

feeling is so perfect that it is better to regard these subjects in their purely human aspect; I doubt if Titian cared for any other. In this Vinigo picture the boy-angel is particularly lovely. The Madonna must have suffered in the cutting process; it is impossible to believe but that, in her case, the 'outlines' have been violated. The second picture, not so confidently claimed for *il Gran Tizian*, is probably a work, and if so a good work, of Cesare's. The Madonna and Child are attended by S. Margarita and S. Antonio Abbate, both good figures, and the countenance of the former is very sweet.

While making a hasty record of these two pictures the dim light became still more dim, and with a joyous peal rung in our honour, and filling the circle of the hills with trembling resonance, there mingled the rolling bass of thunder. My companions without sent in urgent summonses, and truly the view from the low wall of the churchyard terrace, grand enough before, was now full of mountain sublimity. The Pelmo, here the supreme object in the landscape, was veiling itself in blackness, suggesting and yet hiding its presence among the seething clouds. Opposite, across the deep valley of the Boita, a huge crag rose dark against a murky light, and displayed to a keen sight a cross upon its topmost pinnacle, a perpetual memento to Vinigo. But there could be no loitering. The sacristan led the way in a swift descent by a twisting path, that more than once followed the edge of preci-

pices hanging over a misty darkness that the eye shrunk from investigating; and in half an hour we reached the road and the waiting carriage. Vainly we cast a glance upward at Vinigo, wrapt in scudding vapours, and alone with the tempest.

In none of the rambles about Cadore hitherto described have we touched upon the 'oltre Piave' country, except indeed in the brief account of Vigo, but that lies fifteen miles up the river, almost on the confines of its territory. The truth is, that the part I speak of, though very prominent in the landscape, is yet so separated from all we call Cadore by the profoundly deep gorge in which the Piave flows, furnished as this is too with but a single bridge, and it rises in such abrupt and thickly-forested hills, where the purple gloom is broken only by occasional scars of forbidding rock, or by streaks of watercourses, or by bits of footpaths wandering upward into nowhere, that the ordinary pedestrian is daunted from exploring it. Yet, however gloomy in themselves, the view from those mountain sides, extending over all the populous valley of Cadore, is in a high degree rich and varied; and it was, I suppose, this combination of a dense immediate solitude, with a birdseye prospect over a lively scene, that led to the establishment among them, so late as 1720, of a company of Eremites, who chose for their perch a spur of Monte Cridola, called Monte Froppa. They lived very comfortably in a two-storied house

hard by a small church of theirs, dedicated, appropriately enough for a lodge in that wilderness, to St. John the Baptist, and boasting a splendidly carved crucifix by Brustalon. They were seven brethren, cultivating excellent potatoes and other vegetables, and famous for their honey; which, or other good things of earth, so seduced them from things heavenly that they were twice suppressed—first by the Venetian Government, and afterwards in 1810 by Napoleon. The church is still resorted to on certain days, and is kept in decent order. Its tower is almost the only speck of life to catch the eye among the plum-coloured masses of wood.

It was not till after I had been long acquainted with Cadore that I took heart one day to scale those heights, and the result convinced me the Eremites were right. Yet my object, which was to obtain a nearer view of the *chevaux de frise* dolomites seen so strikingly from the Dionisio, did not lead me quite in their direction. It was on one of those cloudless days which favoured every excursion in the September of 1868, that two of us set our faces eastward, making first the necessary sacrifice of some 1,000 feet in height by descending to the deep bed of the Piave. The path drops down under the castle, and through the village of Sotto Castello, whose name explains its situation, till it reaches the picturesque bridge that spans the long-hidden stream; then, on the other side, it took an hour's climb to reach the level we had

started from. The track, a labyrinth of small paths, was evidently a high road after mountain fashion, and indeed there are large pasture Alps hidden up above, which occasion a good deal of traffic of a certain sort. It is not, however, what it used to be, a frequented way into Friuli, connecting Cadore through Maniago and Spilembergo with Udine, and much used in the old days, when all ecclesiastical affairs had their centre in the patriarch. For such purposes it has been long abandoned. No travellers seek it. Portions of it are dangerous, and for many hours—twelve or sixteen—till it reaches Cimolais, it leads through uninhabited country. Of that remote village I have already spoken.

Our walk, so far as it went, was delightful; steep enough no doubt, but the woods gave grateful shade, and at some spots bear-berries and bilberries were in such profusion that we could have gathered bucketsfull. And to relieve the forest sameness, the path would frequently strike to the very edge of the ravine, by the side of which its general course was cast, and, with the precipice sheer below, we feasted upon a glorious burst of prospect over all Cadore, where, and far beyond its boundaries, every mountain form stood serenely, exquisitely clear. Eastward and northward the view was still barred from sight by masses of rock and wood; but, with the magical suddenness that is the charm of mountain climbing, these disappeared as we found ourselves upon a narrow projecting point occupied to our surprise by a *roccolo*, with its circular

wall of foliage, its nets, and other paraphernalia of birdcatching, including a hut, where an aged sire and his grandson, inhabitants of Sotto Castello, spent their summer nights and days. The old man's cheery talk and hospitable water-barrel, no less than his superb prospect, seduced us into half an hour's sprawl upon the turf. East and north were not yet indeed quite open to us, but the long rampart walls of Monte Cridola lifted there their broken battlements beyond an unseen Val Diavolo beneath us; and, in the direction of our path, white shapes of dolomite began to glimmer among the trees, and pierce the blue above. Another hour put us among them at a spot that no lover of such peculiar scenery should miss. Round an alp, that lay like an inverted bowl amidst them, no less than thirty peaks and horns stood closely ranked from north to south, forming a barrier perfectly inaccessible except at either end, where clearly marked cols showed, without question, the track of the two Vecelli, whose winter walk we could now fully appreciate, their safety from man depending upon their peril from nature.

We craved no better dining-room than this noble alp, nor any more striking scene; explaining as it did much that had been long mysterious. Still I would urge the next explorer to secure time, as we had not, for reaching the southern col, where Monte Premaggiore, one of an extensive and unknown throng of dolomites, may be expected to show himself with several of his neighbours, all of them Friulian. Some 500 feet

higher was another *roccolo* with its solitary guardians. Higher still were broken rocks and storm-broken pines; and from that pure height we did not retrace our steps till the sun in the west, swallowing in his blaze all the Ampezzo peaks, warned us there was no time to lose for the descent. The mountain is called Monte Vedorchia, and five hours should be allowed to reach the alp.

That is, perhaps, the most rewarding walk from Pieve; and yet, when I think of Zoppè, I seem to do it wrong to say so. Zoppè is described in the third chapter as it is reached from the Val di Zoldo, but it belongs to Cadore, and is easily accessible from Pieve, by help of a carriage as far as Vodo on the Ampezzo road. There the path, crossing the Boita, strikes directly up the hills, and three hours will place the pedestrian among the most delicious parklike slopes of grass, rolling up and down, sinking or rising into purple wood, over a great extent of country. An hour further and the view of the Pelmo, towering above the little brown village in its green nest, is one of the most impressive that I know; as looking eastward from the same spot, Monte Bosconero with its uplifted hatchet-blade is one of the strangest.

Mte. Bosconero from Loppè

CHAPTER. IX.

AN EXCURSION FROM CADORE.

The German colonies—Visit to the Sette Comuni—Sappada and its origin—The 'Basin' of Sauris—How to get there—The priest of Laggio—Fellow travellers—First sight of Sauris—Talk at the inn fire—Morning view—Path to the Tagliamento—A night capture—Return over the Mauria Pass.

CADORE is an instance of an Italian population projected, through favouring geographical conditions, and the construction of the Roman road, itself a result of them, within the natural borders of the German or Sclavonic tribes. But there are instances more remarkable of an opposite kind, in the so called 'German colonies' scattered along the Italian slopes of the Alps, and which have caused much curious speculation.

They are clustered in three distinct and widely separated groups, the most westerly occupying the valleys radiating from Monte Rosa on the south, and consisting of six communities, slightly differing from each other in dialect; the next in order, a group of three, found in the mountainous country between Trent and Bassano; the third group, numbering four communities, planted among the roots of the Carnic

Alps. These last are in many ways connected with our Cadore country.

As to those round Monte Rosa, an interesting description and discussion will be found in Mr. King's 'Italian Valleys of the Alps.' He agrees with De Saussure in supposing, that the hardy inhabitants of the highest valleys on the northern side, finding the heads of the corresponding valleys on the southern slope unoccupied by the more sensitive Italians, gradually crossed over and took possession of them; those of the Val Ansasca tempted perhaps more especially by the gold mines of Pestarena. The communities of the second group however, much less known than the first, are so differently situated as to suggest a different origin. They are far away from the great dividing Alpine range, and are projected into Italy on the summits of elevated plateaux. The true solution of their origin seems to be that of Dr. Latham, who considers them portions of a great Suabian tribe, occupying, in the middle ages, all Western Tyrol, that have become isolated by the gradual advance of the Italian populations up the surrounding valleys. They may be likened, therefore, to ethnological *islands*, formed by the washing away of the portions once connecting them with their proper continent.

The third or Eastern group, least known of all, is yet better illuminated by history or tradition, and will form the chief topic of this chapter.

But, before betaking ourselves thither, I may be

allowed to describe a visit I once paid to a remarkable member of the middle group, which, under the name of the Sette Comuni, has already appeared in these pages. Like Cadore it was long a republic in dependence upon Venice; like Cadore it suffered under, and successfully resisted the aggressions of Maximilian; like Cadore it is guarded on more than one side by dolomite precipices. These points of resemblance, together with its great singularity, may excuse the digression.

Few, indeed, are the tourists who have climbed the wild bald waste, lifted among the clouds, where the people of the 'seven parishes' dwell. But they have had one illustrious visitor in Sir Roderick Murchison, who many years ago explored the district for its geological peculiarities, an account of which is given in the fifth volume of the 'Geological Journal,' 1849.

As you pass along the railway between Verona and Vicenza, you may see the huge bulk of almost unbroken hill rising rampart-wise, or like an immense 'down,' to the north; and you may discover, at the western corner of it, an extraordinary series of zigzags, carried up the slope till lost on the mysterious, because generally cloud-invested, summit. That is the recent and the only road by which wheels can reach the Sette Comuni; and the best starting-point for it is Schio, about fifteen miles north of Vicenza. There our party —not quite the old Cadore party—arrived one summer evening and began to make inquiries about Asiago, the chief town of the Comuni, and the way thither.

But every one applied to esteemed in this matter his neighbour better than himself, and the process was waxing hopeless as well as tedious, when the right man appeared at last in a Dr. Bologna, who had accompanied Sir Roderick in his excursion. Through him we learnt all we wanted, and particularly that Asiago owned an inn.

The western side of the Sette Comuni descends into a deep valley, through which there rushes out into the plain the river Astico. Up this valley went the former mule track and Sir Roderick; down it Maximilian intended to have come when he made his first dash upon Venice. For us the long circuit by which this track at last attained the height of the plateau was unnecessary, for now the zigzag road attacks the height at once at the first corner, and the wonderful though slow ascent was one of the interesting incidents of the expedition. There are, indeed, plenty of zigzag roads in the Alps, but they generally climb the steeps out of narrow valleys: this, on the contrary, was reared in face of the illimitable plain, which with every turn spread more and more its vastness beneath the eye—fading—fading—in faint and fainter purples and greys to an horizon that might be sea or sky or anything. One single house of refuge stood about two thirds up; some way beyond, the road turned suddenly through a hollow to reach the summit, and then, every symptom of the plain below having utterly vanished, a wide, bare, rolling scene displayed itself, studded with

quaint farmhouses and sprinkled with villages, all high-roofed, grey, and German; a veritable landscape transplanted into Italy out of Bavaria or Würtemberg. The change was charming from its novelty, although almost every element of beauty was left below. The air was fresh and invigorating; the land, in corn or meadow, was divided by flagstones set on end; and the limestone rock broke through the soil in the most singular ridges, like rows of teeth, or sets of nodding images, weird, fantastic, and uncanny; an altogether most curious scene.

The whole plateau slopes inward for some miles, and in about the centre of the depression we came upon Asiago, a long, straggling, odd-looking town, as everything is odd about this region: a large, newly built church at one end, and a small one at the other, were the only buildings that broke the irregular uniformity of high gabled houses huddled together in the midst of the bare waste. As for the inn it was dingy and rough, but we were 'put up' tolerably for the night. As for the people, those that crowded after us in the streets, as if we were a travelling menagerie, were anything but prepossessing. These, however, were not fair specimens in any sense. Asiago itself has a population of about 5,000, and that of the seven parishes altogether is about 40,000. Their trade is in cattle, cheese, timber, and straw plait. The timber is confined principally to the hollows and slopes of the hills towards the north, where there is less population, and

where the country gradually rises till it shoots up in the dolomite, that forms a lofty wall of rock towards the valley of the Brenta.

A brief visit like ours was not one in which much information could be gained, but from an intelligent priest we learned that the dialect is fast dying out, all official business being transacted in Italian, and the catechisms of the schools being now in that language. He could not even procure us one in the old dialect, which was that of the Suabian, or High German, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and much resembled what is still spoken in a remote mountain portion of Bavaria. The people like to call themselves 'Kimbri;' one of the earliest hypotheses concerning them being, that they are remnants of the Cimbri defeated by Marius near Verona. Naturally enough fugitives from that slaughter might rush up these heights, directly impending over the field of battle, for shelter; but what evidence there is, supports the simpler theory already mentioned. Certain it is, however, that their sympathies have always been Italian. Possessing a local independence similar to that of Cadore, they early put themselves under the protection of Venice. Their stout resistance to Maximilian proved their loyalty, and, when once they had succeeded in repulsing him, the difficulty of their country and its isolation prevented his renewing the attempt as he was able to do with Cadore, furnished with its ancient and comparatively easy road. Yet this isolation, though it gave them safety, denied

them culture; and while the Cadore people rose in wealth, fostered art and learning, and supplied names of note to magnificent Venice, the inhabitants of the Sette Comuni on their cloudy height, avoided by the high ways of commerce, remained rude peasants and cattle dealers. They contributed no patricians to Venice. They gave no Titian to the world.

Yet they were not without a wit and wisdom of their own, and a few specimens of their proverbs may serve to indicate a canny cautious people, as mountaineers so frequently are.

'Do not all you can; give not all you have; believe not all you hear; tell not all you know.'

'He who speaks always, speaks ill.'

'A barking dog never bites.'

And here is a picture of human life which will answer to every zone:

'At ten years, a child. At twenty, a wild thing. At thirty, a man. At forty, a stem (or head of a race). At fifty, a stand still. At sixty, going backward. At seventy, an old grey. At eighty, white as all may see. At ninety, a laughing-stock. At one hundred, God be gracious to him.'

Some of our party returned by the road we had come, though the carriage could hardly move from the inn door for the crowd of rude gazers. Two of us slipped through them unperceived, and made for one of the ancient tracks descending into the valley of the Brenta. While upon the open down it was a cheerful

walk, leading presently through a cleanly village, one of the noted seven. We were sorry that Rotzo, containing the most ancient church, the others being rapidly Italianized, lay out of our course; as also the singular fossil beds in the oolitic strata, which, like Rotzo, are away to the north, and near the bed of the only stream, the Asa, of which the Sette Comuni can boast. The old ways naturally led down cracks in the lip of the great basin, which forms the centre of the plateau, and ours was just one of these—at first shallow and then deep—and then, where a little pilgrimage chapel was squeezed in between the narrowing walls of rock (that and a hovel of an inn), the path suddenly dropped into the depths of one of the grandest gorges the Venetian Alps can boast, and that is saying a great deal. It was simply the torrent bed, dry at that season but used in winter for floating down timber, and sunk some thousand feet in gloom between impending precipices, where it writhed its fearful way—now blocked up by huge fallen masses, now shooting downwards towards a dark corner, where it was impossible to speculate upon its likely exit. When such as this formed the only means of access to the Sette Comuni, what wonder that they were impenetrable alike to conquest and to commerce? It cost us two hours scrambling down this extraordinary grip before, again with sudden surprise, we dropped into the gorgeous valley of the Brenta at Valstagna, seven miles above Bassano. It was glowing

with the amber-tinted light of afternoon, and its many villages sparkled amongst the luxuriant verdure of vines, pomegranates, and figs. Far above it all, one solitary little church, shining on the edge of the huge mountain mass from which we had descended, was the only indication of a population so singular and secluded as that of the Sette Comuni.

We now turn to that Friulian group of colonies with which our visits to Cadore early brought us acquainted. It has been already stated that, in the fourteenth century, the people of Caprile, the most active miners in the country, obtained leave of the patriarch to search for metals at a spot called Sappada, near the source of the Piave, on the extreme north-eastern confines of Cadore. It is a high valley, sternly enclosed between the Carnic Alps on the north and a range of towering dolomites on the south, and was at that date already inhabited by a party of strangers, who were known to have crossed the mountains. These people of Sappada are in fact the western-most of four distinct communities more or less connected, and lying at distances of a few hours only from each other.

Next to Sappada, and indeed almost contiguous, is Cima or Orfen, the mixture of two languages leading in most instances to a double nomenclature. This is a collection of red timbered chalets hanging on the ridge that separates the Sappada valley from those whose waters flow eastward into the Tagliamento, and is

clearly an offshoot from Sappada. About twenty-five miles further to the east, but over more than one mountain ridge, is Tischlwang, or Timau. It is near Paluzza, and on what was once the great Roman road constructed originally by Julius Cæsar from Aquileia into Germany; a road now sufficiently deserted, though we have some of us been fortunate enough to tread so far in Cæsar's footsteps.* It is a poor, uninviting spot, and the supposition has been started that it was the station of a Roman garrison protecting the pass, but that the population is an intruding German one is far more likely. To the south of all these, five hours from Sappada, over a steep mountain track, is Sauris, in a high 'basin,' near the head waters of the Tagliamento. Of this more anon.

As to the settlement of Sappada we have the rare fortune to possess a distinct historical statement.† The story is curious and picturesque. Across the mountains northward, in the great Tyrol valley, the Pusterthal, the ruins of the castle of Heimfels crown a lofty bluff at the entrance of the valley of Villgraten near Silian. This castle was used by Maximilian as a magazine for gunpowder and stores in his wars with the Venetians. Earlier it had belonged to the Counts of Görz, great princes in their day, to whom a large

* Dolomite Mountains, p. 177.

† Ciani relates it in his history; and an article in the 'Jahrbücher der Literatur' (Wien, Dec. 1847) tells the story; as we were also told it, with some variations, near the spot, in 1864.

part of Tyrol and Carinthia belonged, and here they held their summer court. Before them it was a stronghold of the Counts of Greifenstein; and, earlier still, the whole Villgraten valley was the property of the great monastery of Innichen close by, to which it had been given in 788 A.D. by the last of the Bavarian Dukes of Tyrol. The castle was built by a Count of Greifenstein, and probably in the eleventh century; but the point to be noted is, that it was erected by Styrian workmen brought for the purpose, and aided in the heavier portion of the work and in carriage of materials by the inhabitants of the valley. On the conclusion of the work these people—according to one account the Styrian artisans with their wives and families; according to another, the folks of Villgraten, and in consequence of the gross oppression to which the building of the castle had given rise—crossed the Alpine range southward, over that Monte Croce pass where the Cadorini kept watch and ward in war time, and settled in the then uninhabited valley of Sappada. The two accounts are not incompatible, since the migration probably included both parties. Certain it is that traditions of the cruelties attending forced labour linger round several lordly ruins in these parts, finding expression in the saying—'They were built with the blood of the peasants.'

It is seldom more than a glimmer of history that irradiates the grey castle walls and dismantled towers with which the middle ages furnished every convenient

crag in the Alps. So grimly silent now, a few hints are all we get to guide us in wondering what sort of human life they sheltered once, what vicissitudes they witnessed, how they rose at first a new feature in the dark landscape, how they came to be left at last the empty shells we see them. Heimfels offers us pictures a little more distinct than usual; now of antique workmen girt with rule and square; now of the count's gay court; now of sixteenth century arquebusses, falconets, and other queer artillery; and specially of the first settlers of Sappada, a word, by the way, of Romansch origin, signifying a hoe or mattock, with which tool the invaders marched to conquer the forest solitude.

The new comers claimed in 1070 the protection of the patriarch as ruler of Friuli, within whose confines they now found themselves. He granted them many privileges; yet for some time they had neither priest nor church, but resorted for sacred rites to a parish six hours down towards Udine, where, in the churchyard, are still to be seen the gravestones of the old Sappadiners. When they built their church is not known, only that it was burnt down in 1770. Their present one dates from 1778. In this fire perished all their registers earlier than 1660. They boast of 13 hamlets with a resident population of 1,200, while some 200 more are always travelling as dealers of some sort. One honest man we met there had even been to Hamburg with his goods—wood ware I think; but this was the extremest limit alike of his travels and his geography.

They are hardy, laborious, well conducted, and, unlike the Sette Comuni people, lean to their German rather than their Italian neighbours; nevertheless, since 1848, Sappada has been attached to Cadore. Their houses, many of them very old, show within all the German cleanliness. Beans, peas, barley, and oats are the only produce of their arable land, circumscribed as it is by woods and the gigantic rocks that shut them from the world. It is only quite recently that they have opened a road for themselves to Cadore through the perilous gorges of the Piave.

And now at last for Sauris, the most secluded, and to my mind the most charming, as it is reputed to be the most ancient, of the colonies. We had visited all the others, and now this lonely nest must be ours also. As already said, it belongs to the Tagliamento country, a name with a sound of battle in it ever since it got linked with that of Napoleon in 1797. But Napoleon crossed the stream near where the modern tourist, on the endless railway bridge, crosses its broad white bed and many channels, half-way between Udine and Pordenone. The country I speak of is far away, in its upper mountain course, of which the traveller on the once busy high road between Vienna and Venice by way of Klagenfurt, a route described in Mendelssohn's delightful letters, obtains a glimpse as he passes the opening of the long Val di Socchieve on the west, guarded by the grand pyramidal mass of Monte

Mariana. Ascending that lengthy and remarkable trough of a valley, there are presently seen at its head, especially if favoured by a clear sunset, the jagged outlines of the Cadore dolomites, and about twenty miles further a rapid stream, the Lumiei, comes shooting from a dark ravine on the north to join the Tagliamento in the wide and noble valley. The Lumiei collects its waters in what is called the 'Basin of Sauris;' but no practicable path exists along the sides of the tortuous and gloomy gorge which it fills with its roar and mist, and Sauris communicates with the world only by a steep and roundabout path over the mountains higher up. This is its chief approach; we, starting from Cadore, which to our ignorance had seemed as convenient, found ourselves making for the back door.

At Cadore we soon discovered our mistake. Though but a few hours distant, the two places are separated by more than one pass, and a frontier, that of Friuli, which in Austrian times occasioned more than one difficulty. In answer to our inquiries at Tai, the only clear notion of the Cadore people was, that we must inquire at Sappada, which, as it required a long circuit, was by no means clear to us. 'Sauris, Sauris,' went from one to another in an unsatisfactory way among the groups at the inn door, and the wet weather that had set in made everything more unsatisfactory still. But one evening a sudden clatter on the stone staircase betokened visitors, and the landlord, the sub-landlord, and various other 'subs' all in a crowd at our chamber-

door, announced the 'Priest of Sauris,' by good luck on his way through Cadore to exchange duty with a friend at a distance. 'So you want to see my country,' said a pleasant voice in homely German, and a delightful old figure of a Geistlicher in rusty black stepped from the crowd, and presently, seated at our table, snuff-box in hand, was pottering with a snuffy finger over the map. Lamenting that in his long sojourn at Sauris, where, 'we must speak as our people speak,' he had lost much of his 'gutes Deutsch,' he did his best with the remainder, and soon put us on the shortest way to reach his valley by a path from Laggio, one of the Cadore villages on the side of Monte Cornon, about twelve miles from Pieve. Thence in five hours over two mountain ridges we should arrive at Sauris di Sopra, the first hamlet in the 'basin,' and in an hour more his own house at the further end. 'My people will do all they can for you,' said he, but wine and bread seemed to be the limit of their resources.

Everything brightened after this, and notably the sky, from which next morning all the clouds had rolled away, leaving the mountains sharp, dark, and glistening; the woods more purple than ever, the cultured plots and unshorn hay slopes of the most vivid green, and the white campaniles of the Cadore valley all shining in their whiteness. Gleefully we two—the ancient comrades of many such a ramble—packed ourselves into one of the handy single-horse traps of the country, and waving adieus to the ladies in the balcony, and to

all the 'subs' about the door, took the familiar hill to Pieve. No sooner up than down again (so narrow is the ridge upon which the town is built), and into the broad, bright valley beyond,—the fertile, populous 'strath' of Cadore, ruled from end to end by the castle on its high, protecting hill. In and out we swung of the swarming villages, and round about the scooped ravines, each with a wrathy stream, each with a glimpse to westward of the wild Ampezzo dolomites; while eastward, rose at gaps in the near hills those other marvellously riven dolomite forms which so long had all the interest to us of an unsolved mystery. Through Domegge, through Lozzo, places of which the reader has probably heard enough, we rattled with desirable speed, considering the crowds of soldi-clamouring children, and turned at last to the Piave, crossing it where it thundered at a dizzy depth below, by the anciently fortified bridge of Pelos; and then slowly creeping round and up the base of Monte Cornon in the 'oltre Piave' district, here quite as populous as Cadore proper, and perhaps more beautiful, we reached in some three hours the village of Laggio, the last of several of which our little Vigo with its 'Difesa' church is one, spread along the verdant slopes facing the south, and commanding the wide vista of the Cadore valley.

Our friendly priest had armed us with two letters, one to his brother at Sauris, the other, touching a trustworthy guide, to the curé of Laggio. The black cap and dark phiz of the latter were leaning out of a

window in the canonica, as with our driver and two or three peasants hanging on with offers of service, we trudged up the winding path to the door, the trap, to avoid a long detour, having been left a couple of miles behind at a small inn. When our object was clearly seen, the cap and phiz quickly disappearing above, appeared below, and the grave young priest they belonged to, inviting us to enter, and dragging forth chairs from the recesses of his kitchen, motioned also to his housekeeper to grind and brew the customary coffee.

So far so good, but then came the difficulty, that the thick-tongued Italian of these good people was to us utterly puzzling, and it took some time to understand that somebody's brother would go with us to Sauris, and introduce us there to somebody else who could speak the 'good German' that the Sauris people, whatever their origin, could certainly not speak for themselves. That settled, as the morning was now wearing on, after thanking the young priest for his helpful mediation, and receiving cordial invitation to look in if we passed that way on our return, we pressed for an immediate start. But the somebody's brother must first find somebody's cousin to borrow a basket from, and another somebody had a message to send, and in short half the village became concerned in the matter before we could fairly clear the houses, and fall into the pedestrian swing. Then out into the hot sun, and up the steep hill side, and we were *en route* at last.

To the right was the large village of Lorenzago, with the track beyond it leading through forest to that pass of Mauria, which was of such frequent importance in Cadore affairs. By this we hoped to return. At present we were mounting what was still a road for wheels, but which soon became broken and deep-channelled, evidently an unfulfilled intention, winding between close wooded hills that showed a fatiguing sameness of steepness and greenness, enlivened only by a few clear pinnacles peeping here and there over their heavy shouldering masses. Our sturdy guide strode on weighted with our knapsacks, swift and silent; but after a while a little information began to ooze. Here a man was killed last week by yonder fragment breaking from yonder scar far up above. There, where the rattling sound was heard among the heights, the woodcutters were at work for the Perarolo merchants, and the logs were tumbling down. And there —hush!—there, on that plot of green, by that solitary châlet, there was a brush with the Austrians in 1848, and the soldiers had the worst of it! To us, who had not then heard of poor Calvi's exploits, this was quite a new idea, for these forest-paths seemed far out of reach of the troubles of the world. Yet scarce two months afterwards these very shades were again to ring with the crack of rifles in the brief Friulian rising of 1864; and in two years more the eddy of a great war swept up hither, to receive a final check at the Tre Ponti below.

Travellers on a mountain path soon troop together.

Three elderly peasants resting under a tree gathered themselves up to join us, and then seven lightfooted girls with white sleeves, short petticoats, and empty creels (loaded with butter in the morning), came clacking through the wood, and made a long tail behind; and then a tall jäger with gun and telescope strode up and fell in march, lithely planting his steps up the broken tangled ground; till presently, as a gush of 'buona acqua' flashed to light in the grass, all squandered themselves down upon the sward for a gossip and a drink. We had reached a jutting earthy promontory, and the geography became at once intelligible to us, for in the midst of the backward view rose the familiar form of the Antelao. A glacier swept down northward from its crest and the sharp notch was seen—the Forcella Piccola—which offers a short cut into the Ampezzo, and separates the Antelao from the huge masses of the Marmorolo. Thus we got our bearings. The girls were soon afoot again, and with bare legs twinkling through the bushes shot on ahead, disdaining the single foot track, carolling here, and there, and everywhere, jodelling and screaming at each find of bilberries, but always up, and on, till we lost them into who knows what skyward nest!

Then the sweet and nimble Alpine air began to breathe upon us, and the downy upland opened, and the peaks of range after range stood on fair terms about, and caught the western beams—the peaks of a new region, for we had crossed a grassy ridge and all

the Cadore country was gone and Friuli lay before us. The Sappada dolomites stretched to northward; and southward others, all new and strange, but soon lost again as we dipped into a vast Alpine hollow speckled with innumerable cattle, and musical with the mingled notes of innumerable bells. Half an hour further, on a second ridge, clustered the long, low roofs of the herd-huts, where the supper pot would soon be boiling. This solitary settlement is known as Campo Razzo, and lies on the shoulder of Monte Tiersine, the chief mountain block of these parts.

Navigating the forlorn tracts of mud that always surround these shepherd encampments, we found entrance to a large, dark interior, containing two or three enormous cauldrons, each suspended over ashes in a hole, and a huge churn worked by something like a wooden anchor swinging from the ceiling. Six grimy fellows, brown with sun and black with smoke, stood transfixed with dumb surprise as we darkened the door. We furnished ourselves with seats, and still they stood and stared, till at last the word 'Inglesi' went low from lip to lip. We can guess something now of the thoughts that were slowly filtering through their brains, as, on the point of a rising of which they must have had some inkling, though we had none, two Englishmen presented themselves where Englishmen had never been seen before. Their cogitations lasted long, but at length they gave us what we asked for, bowls of hot milk, or rather foaming cream, which

might have feasted gods. A quarter-florin piece in payment, their chief gazed at in his open palm as if it were a mighty bounty, if not a doubtful bribe.

Sauris was but an hour further, but no sign of it appeared among the rolling hills that surged from side to side between ranges of dolomite. Soon, however, we were dropping into forest depths, and strangely fell upon traces of a road again—not old but new! It was the work of those pestilent Perarolo merchants, who were going to tap the Sauris basin of its wood, and were spending great sums upon a road to drag the timber up. Deeper and deeper in the shades we sunk, and then the truth began to break, that the phantom of a 'German-speaking man' was leading us astray. For it should be known that a steep ridge of hill divides the Sauris 'basin' longitudinally into two quite different portions, of which the northern, the true habitat of the 'colony,' is an elevated sloping hollow, while the southern is a deep, dark, forest-filled, and uninhabited ravine, except for the 'German-speaking man,' who, as agent for the Perarolo people, occupied a newly erected solitary dwelling, where he could superintend the cutting of the wood. Had he been able to give us lodging it would still have answered no purpose of ours to visit that gloomy gorge. Fortunately, by means of his 'good German,' we learnt that a house doing duty as an inn could be found at Sauris di Sopra, and upon that all our hopes were fastened.

So now we had to climb the dividing ridge—a labour we might have saved by working round the basin rim from the herd huts of Campo Razzo. We climbed, and then at last, while yet the sweetest light that ever streamed from the west tipped every roof and gable, and the evening clouds above lay in long lines of pink, we saw before us Sauris.

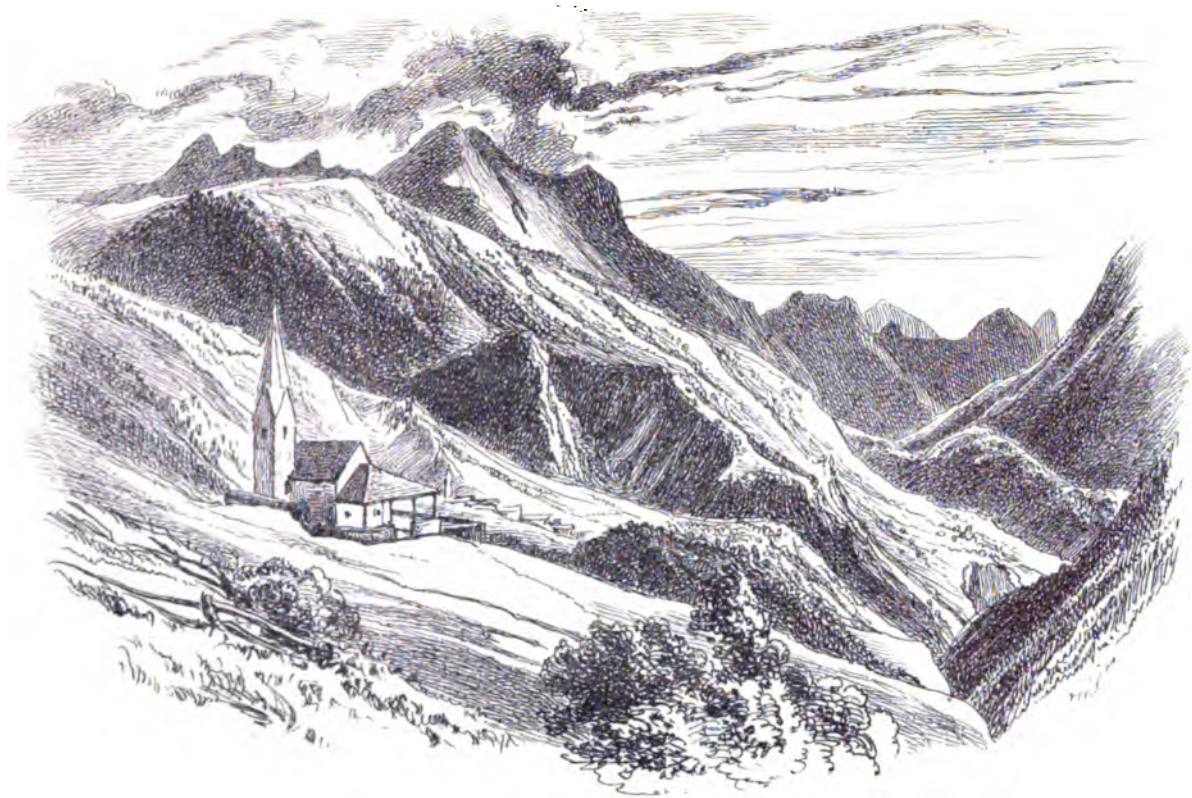
It won our hearts directly. The shelving, sloping hollow went down in steps below, and on each step a village stood. Close by was 'Sopra,' nodding as old chalet villages nod, that with brown and wizened dwellings cling to a steep hillside, and from each house there hung a patch of garden. Lower, on a grassy terrace, rested a toy-house of a church, German in every line. Lower still, on the edge of the next descent, was 'Sotto,' a larger village, and with a touch of Italy in its white campanile and white-walled houses, just glimmering in the distance. The third hamlet, Stua, lay too deep for sight in the valley bottom. Latteis, the fourth, perched on a shoulder overlooking the narrow gorge, by which the river escapes from the 'basin,' was hidden likewise. Northward, the Morghendleit, a great bulk of hill, shut all snugly in. Southward, a lofty wall of dolomite, including several noble peaks, fenced off the southern heat. Eastward, ridge upon ridge of interlacing hills, stretched far into unknown country—only that it must belong, we knew, to historical Friuli. Westward, at our backs, rose green sheltering 'Alps.' Here might the settlers, whenceso-

ever they had wandered, find a home — a home of balmy freshness near to the sky and stars—yet with no single savage feature of the Alpine world; a home where they could live and die in peace while all the great wars went on below.

Two douce Sauris men had joined us on the ridge, who now with slow Highland caution pointed out a rough house of stone, separate from, and of more recent date than, the wooden tenements of the village, as our inn. Yet there was nothing to mark an inn till we had penetrated to a barely furnished inner room, where two or three men, sipping strong waters, were playing at cards with one who seemed the master. He, a fine, genial-looking young fellow, quietly swept up the cards as we entered, and rising, gave us seats at the head of the table; only, however, to subject us to a rigid examination in the traveller's catechism—a series of questions to which we were pretty well accustomed, but here propounded with more than usual deliberation, and an easy postponement of all matters belonging to lodging and entertainment, which was rather trying. At last, tolerably satisfied, the hitherto silent company simultaneously handling their snuff-boxes, said 'ja,' and the host said 'ja' too, and then, upon renewed suggestion of supper, said 'ja' again, and this time loudly called 'Veronica'—till she, the wife, a a pleasant-tempered body, appeared at the door, and received instructions for that meal. Then we strolled out to the solitary little church.

It stood alone, some quarter of a mile from the village, on a green knoll which the autumn scythe had not yet touched. A low mossy wall surrounded the small graveyard, and in the threshold of the lych-gate lay the iron grating over a narrow fosse, which is supposed to make good the defence of the sacred enclosure against the intruding Evil one. The porch, supported on short wooden pillars, was nearly as large as the church itself; and, with the low Gothic tower and spire and lych-gate grating, completed the resemblance to the Carinthian village churches. The small windows were, if I recollect rightly, square-headed with a single mullion. There seemed nothing worthy of note, but the whole was a perfect idyl of village peace. Even the dead disturbed the ground but rarely. Each seemed to slumber long before his neighbour joined him, and each lay under a small heaving turf mound, without stick or stone to mark his resting-place. We sat on the wall and moralised, till our thoughts took a turn for supper.

But Veronica was not ready; and, in the pitch black kitchen, we sought the cozy bench encircling the raised hearth whereon the wood-fire crackled, sending its smoke to curl along the rafters, till it could twist itself out of a window. A large pot was wabbling, but the only dish concocting was a bowl of rice-soup—if rice boiled in the richest milk, seasoned with salt and cheese, could be called soup rather than pudding. That, and decent bread, and a few shreds of frizzled



Sauris

bacon, and wonderful coffee that no Paris boulevard could equal, made a capital meal.

Then, toasting still our feet at the hearth flame, which flickered on the faces of some half-dozen nondescripts around, we plied the host with questions in our turn; yet to very little purpose beyond matters of topography. 'The jägers tell us we are Kimbri,' was about as much historical information as we could extract; except, indeed, that in 1848 an Austrian detachment had occupied the valley, the same that came to grief with the Cadore people on the other side of the pass. Of course, the recent sale of the woods in the Lumiei gorge was a topic of interest. These, however, did not belong to the Sauris people but to the town of Ampezzo (not to be confounded with the district of that name in Tyrol), the nearest commune on the Tagliamento. A lease for ten years disposed of the felling of the trees for that time, and the road we had stumbled on, constructing by Signor Lazarei of Perarolo, would cost 10,000 gulden. The possessions of the 'basin' seemed rather contracted, at least in that direction; but, then, the still numerous chamois of the mountains, haunting especially the bare precipices of the Clapsavon to the south-west, were free to all who chose to follow them.

'Sopra,' they said, was the oldest village, which would seem to suggest a northern origin for the colony, since it lay where settlers, coming from that direction, would descend upon the first smooth tempting slope. But

'Sotto' was the larger, and, being lower, had come more under Italian influences. The parish priest lives in this latter village, while his coadjutor, whom we had seen at Cadore, takes Stua and the few houses at the exit of the valley under his care. Sopra, the upper village, was even served occasionally by the priest of Sappada five hours distant; a recognition, one might guess, of some old kinship between the colonies, though the Sauris people claim to be of a more ancient stock.

Italian, as usual, was gradually prevailing; being taught to the children in the schools, and used in their catechism, while it was remarkable that each family owned an Italian as well as a German name. Our host, whose father came from Bavaria, and who was therefore not strictly a Sauris man, was known not only as Johann Neiderer but as Giovanni Polentarutti, a cognomen sounding something like a joke on the part of his Italian neighbours. Already his German was difficult to understand, and Italian came more readily. The true dialect of the colony is described (in an article in the Vienna Year Book of Literature) as a drawling corrupt sort of speech, intermixed with Italian, and unintelligible words. The male population amounted to nearly 600; and in build, countenance, and dress, the people differ much from the Sappada folks, and are conjectured to be the remains of an ancient population of Friuli, the result of one of those great invasions to which, during the decay of Rome, it was so

grievously subject. If so, this is an instance like the 'Sette' of an ethnological island rather than a settlement; or,—to vary the figure, let us say—a little pool left by a great flood that has long receded. Upon such matters our present company could tell us nothing. Their ignorance, the difficulty of communication in the absence of the friendly priest, and our limited time, must be our excuse for the meagreness of the information collected.

But indeed, by this time, half the company, with legs stretched out to the fire, heads propped against the wall, and mouths wide open, were fast asleep; and we, who had not yet seen our beds, desired to do more than see them. So Veronica and her husband led with candles, up the creaking fusty stairs, to a large dark landing, and then the one was ushered by the host into a square white chamber, with low, long windows in two sides, the usual guest-room; while the other was beckoned by Veronica into her own matrimonial apartment, vacated for the nonce, scrupulously tidy, and comfortable enough but for the presence of the household clock, whose emphatic ticking and most obstreporous striking, twice over to every hour, the traveller must confess to having silenced at last by one stealthy assassin-dig into its vitals.

As morning dawned it needed but to turn in bed to see the far-off, jagged, purple lines of mountain ranges clear cut against the redness, and the kindling of the wisps and bars of cloud above; and then, as the glory brightened, each intervening ridge of hill

marked out in silver, and the grassy terrace of the little church gleaming like an emerald. A rare, soft calm possessed both sky and earth, which the waking village did not spoil. Faint wreaths of smoke, indeed, coiled upward; and each dwelling sent forth its one or two with measured step to the hill, and thin voices and far lowings filled the air, but these things told of a calm of life that equalled that of nature. We lingered with a pensive longing over this sweet scene, and were fain to envy an existence passed with no other mutations than those of the seasons—no other incidents than those that befal a few homely hearths. Yet, without culture, without the means of contrast, and of stimulus to the imagination, how could its calm beauty be appreciated? No, other conditions are necessary to wake up all that complex life of mind, and heart, and soul, through which alone the tranquil side of nature can be fully enjoyed. Let it be sufficient then, as it is well, thus to quaff sometimes a draught of peace, and to pass on.

The Morghendleit, truly a 'morning' mountain, glowed all over as the sun arose, and we were not long in following the string of dames and men zig-zagging up its steeps. It was soon sprinkled with mowers, and, however high we climbed, a row of tiny figures stood higher still against the sky. Over this hill lies the path to Sappada, and by this approach Sauris looks to most advantage, answering best to its title of 'basin'—a basin with one break in its rim, beyond which, eastward, the lines of hill sink to a far

horizon. We did not reach the summit, but descending for breakfast and a sketch, started soon after, with a Sauris man for guide, bound for the Tagliamento. Our companion of the previous day was returning to Laggio with a couple of cheeses at his back.

Our course lay down the 'basin' towards its broken rim, through pleasant meadows, bushy paths, and by the craggy banks of a stream. We passed through Sotto di Sauris, owning some wealthy-looking houses, rather surprising in such a spot, and so down to the deep bottom in which Stua stands. Stua is equivalent to the German 'klause' and the English 'gorge;' and here, where two or three houses are plotted about, the Lumiei, issuing from the long solitary ravine above, dark with its doomed woods, receives the Sauris stream, and rushes into the jaws of the defile by which it escapes to the Tagliamento. As already said, no practicable path accompanies it, and the track, the one highway for Sauris, crossing a wooden bridge ascends for two or three hours through noble forests on the flank of Monte Pura. Noble they are for extent, and also for abundance of the silver fir (*Pinus picea*) standing in thick and tangled groups, wan with age, and lifting their ragged tops to a vast height.

We met several people on this steep path, and notably some damsels from the Tagliamento, whose delicately modelled oval faces were excellently set off by spotless white sleeves and kerchiefs, and pale lilac dresses. They beat the Sauris women hollow, whose

uncomely features, dingy blue petticoats, and brown linen had, sooth to say, been a trifle disenchanting.

A glade, where a rill gushed forth, and a scooped-out log received its sweet water for the benefit of thirsty wayfarers, made our dining-room. Sauris was almost gone, sunk in the blue softness of the woods; the final ridge was near, and gaining it we suddenly opened upon a scene of never-to-be-forgotten splendour, which threw the poor little homely Alpine colony sadly into the shade. In a moment the glorious Socchieve valley had opened at our feet, all bathed in the rays of the West, decked throughout its length with little red-roofed towns and villages, and gleaming white buildings; rich with the richest of verdure, soft with the softest of umbrage, that fell like carpets of pile adown the hills on either side, bright with the flashing Tagliamento in its midst, the whole vista closed by the perfectly pyramidal and rose-tinted form of Monte Mariana; while beyond, and all along that eastern horizon, the sharp dolomite peaks of the Julian Alps peered among the illuminated clouds. It was lovely beyond all words to tell, and we were loth to leave that point of vision for the broken path that dropped with cruel haste from crag to crag below.

One of the little red-roofed towns was to be our sleeping-place, the Ampezzo, that had sold its woods. It faces the mouth of the gorge, where the Lumiei re-appears, and while it was yet all full of lustrous light we entered its long straggling street, picturesque with

the Italian 'abandon' which lets the vine trail where it likes, the carnation dangle out of the glassless window, and the gourd sprawl over the courtyard. The 'due Columbe' looked forlorn, and its grey-visaged landlord downcast, but it had means in its kitchen, and tolerable chambers above, where we might have slept the sleep of the pedestrian had there been no evil in the air.

It is an old rule of the Austrian police to catch their birds napping, and, true to the traditions of many a successful capture, three o'clock had scarcely struck before a loud summons shook the courtyard door, peremptorily repeated till the house was astir, and bolts and bars withdrawn. Then followed low confabulation, and then steps upon the stairs, and gleams of light through cracks and key-holes, and then an ominous rat-tat upon the bedroom door itself. It was of no use to dally over the inevitable turn out. The door opened upon swords and bayonets and plumes, and the white faces of the landlord and his helps, holding guttering candles in the rear. We were put through a long examination, and things for a time looked awkward, since one of us had left his passport at Cadore, and the venerable Foreign Office document of the other was covered with the visas of years; moreover, was there not a red shirt actually hanging over a chair? Truth and innocence, however, at length prevailed, and we were allowed in the morning to engage a light sort of waggon with a couple of horses for Forno di Sopra, sixteen miles higher up the valley,

whence, by the pass of Mauria, we might cross on foot into the Cadore country again.

The scenery of this upper Tagliamento proved charmingly romantic, and the visit of the gendarmerie, whispered along the road as we went, was clearly taken as a token of respectability. Again, at the end of a long climb to the top of a ridge that cuts across the valley and banishes the Tagliamento into a sightless depth on the left, the backward vista of the valley closed by Monte Mariana, opened splendidly, though from a much lower level than on the night before. Then the valley changed its character, and became solitary and almost savage; bare dolomites appeared in front, and the road swept under precipices of sheer rock on the right, and crossed in a dark corner over a sort of devil's bridge.

This was another spot famed in the struggles of 1848, for it was the scene of a bloody encounter in which the Austrians suffered much from stones and fragments hurled upon the narrow road, which has depths below almost equal to the heights above. A black obelisk stands in memory of the fallen. But such things are not forgotten. They consecrate the spot to Patriotism, and in this upper valley it was that the ill-advised insurrectionists, with whom we had been confounded, presently found most support and most frequent shelter. Forno, the village we were now approaching, was afterwards often quoted as their headquarters. Eventually they passed up northward as far as Pontebba, the last Italian village on the road into

Carinthia, but finally turned westward again through Sappada to Cadore. A sharp fight at the Tre Ponti dispersed them, and still more the snows of winter upon the hills; but the following year we heard of a few hunted men still subsisting among the Sappada mountains.

There are two Forno villages—di Sotto and di Sopra—as in German valleys there are so constantly an 'ober' and an 'unter.' They were once, as their name implies, smelting-places for ore, and were granted in very early times to the Abbey of Innichen in the Pusterthal. Forno di Sopra is quite Alpine in character and in near neighbourhood with the wild dolomite group glimpsing itself to the eastward of Cadore, into the abysses of which we only peered at present, promising future acquaintance. We were climbing, once more on foot, by the side of the infant Tagliamento babbling in the grass, and playing among the pine trees; and then we turned up a gentle slope to the pass of Mauria, by which Cadore held so long to Friuli, and which sometimes let in friends and sometimes foes. From the summit, a grassy saddle, we descended through a great forest tract, and beneath the magnificent circling precipices of Monte Cridola into the Cadore valley, halting awhile at its first village, Lorenzago—the headquarters of Savorgnano during the campaign of Alviano, and the metropolis of these eastern slopes, cut off by the deep ravine of the Piave from the more populous side. Thence a ten miles drive returned us in grateful evening cool to our inn at Tai.

CHAPTER X.

CADORE THE CRADLE OF LANDSCAPE ART.

Monte Zucco for a point of view—Cadore and Venice—The genius of landscape art—The pathos of Nature: in form, colour, shadow, mutability, and record of time—In sympathy with the pathos of life—Perception of the pathos of Nature—Period of its development concurrent with the era of discovery and the change in religious ideas—Influence of geographical knowledge and facilities for travel—Less wholesome influences in the conditions of modern civilisation—Titian's relation to the modern era—His greatness in colour, portrait, and landscape—His characteristic sadness—The special influences of Cadore and Venice upon his genius—Farewell.

WE must say farewell to Cadore; we must take our leave of Titian; we will do both from the summit of Monte Zucco.

Overhanging the 'waters' meet' of the Piave and the Boita—the meeting of the tossing waters rushing hitherwards from the woods of Sappada and the rocks of Ampezzo,—at the very apex of the angle formed by the sister torrents, rise with absolute abruptness the precipices of Monte Zucco. The outward look of the hill is, therefore, stern enough; but from within, from the smiling country behind, the aspect is very different. From the inn at Tai you may step at once upon its green slopes, winding with park-like sweetness among encroaching woods, and sprinkled with graceful pine

stems, whose tops cast a flickering shade. That is the lowest platform of the hill. A path climbing steeply among the crags and the woods that embower them, leads to the second, a hummocky grassy ridge, where the goat-bell tingles in the lightsome air, and the mower swings his scythe through the fragrant swath; where, on some of the knolls, the bird-catching apparatus may be found at work, or the hemp driers patterning the slopes.

Successive lifts, now over broken bluffs, and now through close wood, conduct from glade to glade and from ridge to ridge, the views expanding as we go, and sometimes a sudden depth revealing a thread of road, or the roofs of a tiny village, till at last there is a manifest narrowing towards a final summit upon which the startled foot finds itself on every side at the edge of a precipice, fringed and disguised with bushes.

Naturally much of Cadore is here commanded: all its mountains, and the Boita valley completely, as it winds round towards the Ampezzo. You soon feel that this last is the point in the view, and will settle yourself among the bushes with your face to the west, where the rays of the declining sun, if you have chosen well the hour, will soon shoot along the vale and glitter in the stream far beneath. The Antelao rises darkly on the right, vast woods drop like curtains on the left, and the Sasso di Pelmo fills up the vista with an effect sometimes as if a ruined staircase rose before you straight up into the cloudy vault of heaven. The

battlefield lies below, and the bridge—Titian's bridge—is faintly seen, as if hooking the great cliffs together for a moment across the stream. Southward—just turning your head—deep under the crags, is Perarolo, with its timber yards, like a German toy, so small it looks; and, down the blue gorge beyond, the Piave cleaves its way to Italy.

The prospect, from one point or another of Monte Zucco, sums up in itself all that gave Cadore a history: the two valleys which fostered the earliest population; the rock that provided a stronghold, and that gathered round it the earliest dwellings, and, as time went on, the official and the stateliest buildings; the great cleft by which the united streams reach the plains, offering a vent to commerce, as too often an avenue for war.

For Cadore owes everything to the Piave. It led the Roman thither with his road and military stations, stretching upward into Germany; a road that, once established, was ever after the artery along which flowed all the life-blood of the country. By it she drew from the north its solid wealth of merchandise, and from the south riches and culture; so that, while still an Alpine community, the peasant life developed into merchant life, not losing the virtues of the one, and gaining with the other tastes peculiar to the time and place.

For the cleft of the Piave led to Venice, and it was Venetian culture that was drawn thereby into the heart of Cadore. The mountaineer, firm in nerve and pur-

The Pelmo from Mte. Zucco

pose, descended to the dazzling city and returned rich with more than gold. There he touched the traffic of the known world; there he dipped into the stream of thought, which, flowing from whatever source, swept always with a brilliant eddy round the palatial city. There, above all, he breathed the atmosphere of art, and the mountaineer became a Titian—a Titian, one side of whose greatness rested upon the social splendour of Venice, but whose other side leaned against the mountain solitudes, and gave birth to a new thought in art, which has elevated landscape into an independent branch of design.

This Cadore country was then, in a sense, the cradle of Landscape art; and it will not be inappropriate to a farewell hour on the summit of Monte Zucco, to reflect a little upon the meaning of this new direction of artistic faculty, and how Titian became its originator.

It means then, as we take it, using natural scenery not merely as a repertory of pleasing forms, colours, and suggestions suitable as a background for the human figure, or to set off the subject in hand, but as itself a subject, because itself a sufficient source of noble and pathetic emotion. It means the poetry of natural scenery as expressed in art. Especially it means the apprehension and expression of the pathetic element in landscape, if we are to judge from the spirit in which it has been treated by all its greatest masters: Claude, pathetic in the sweetness of his

sunshine; the two Poussins in their solemn masses of cloud and foliage; Cuyp in his noontide stillness; Rembrandt in his fitful gleams; Rubens in his wide and chequered champaign; Gainsborough in his rural peace; Turner in his infinite atmosphere; and in truth all those of our modern English school who have dealt broadly with the changeful effects of skies, and hills, and seas.

But is Nature truly pathetic? Or is it only a morbid fancy, or a wearied civilisation, that finds her so? Mr. Ruskin's doctrine of the 'pathetic fallacy,' though not directly concerned with this question; the bald realism of others; and, again, the amiable talk of those who, forgetful of the sterner teachings around us, find only 'good in everything' and 'babble of green fields'—suggest the latter view. Yet surely a little consideration shows that Nature is indeed pathetic, and that the noblest thought will always read her so. It is true that, as Bacon said of music, *Nature* 'helpeth the mood it findeth.' But, just as music differs in expression, so does Nature; and it is open to inquire where lies the stress of her utterance in this respect; or, to put it otherwise, what is the mood for which she has made the largest provision in her vast storehouse of symbol?

If, to answer this question, we glance at her powers of expression under the different heads of Form, Colour, and Light and Shadow; the first of these, though an endless hieroglyphic in every separate line and contour, is certainly the least effective in the way of pathetic

suggestion. Yet the prevailing characteristic of Form in nature may be summed up in one word—grace; and grace is never without a certain pathos. It awakes a peculiar tenderness, due perhaps to the idea of fragility, weakness, or mutability, attached to every lovely thing, or perhaps to some more subtle association still. Is it not so, however, if we analyse the pleasure arising from the gracefulness of trees, and leaves, and flowers, and grasses, and curling waves, and wisps of clouds; nay, even from the firm yet exquisite curves that build up mountain crests among the clouds? Nature subdues by grace in form, as feminine beauty appeals to all that is tender in the heart of man.

But the prevailing sentiment of Nature is more obvious in her management of Colour. Her brilliant colours are rare, and, however bright, possess a delicacy eloquent of evanescence. Flowers which show the brightest are the very image of frailty, and every jewelled cloud momently dissolves; or, if we turn to the richer tints of soil, and sward, and woodland, and crag, we find them chastened by the browns, and greys, and purples, elaborately worked in amongst them; while, through the magic of atmosphere, she has the means of refining the grossest or most powerful into hues that mingle with those of the sky itself. The sky! we need but to name that wonderful, lucid canopy, infinitely tender in all its thousand tints, and, at the moments of its greatest glory of colour, fullest of solemn utterance, to remind us of its pathos.

Atmosphere, in all this, is the chief agent; and, so far as this function of it is concerned, seems to have been devised for the very purpose of veiling and subduing splendour to the verge of pathos. It does this as a mere softening medium; but its pathetic office is still more effectively served by the mists and clouds it supports, and that haunting woods and water, clinging to the hills, or soaring above them—unsubstantial, dreamy, mysterious as they are—are endlessly and in all forms pathetic.

Nor must we forget the effect of atmosphere upon every extensive prospect, enhancing distance till the mind is lost in vastness, and, by baffling eyesight, raising the thrill of mystery. The pathos of both these impressions must be admitted, though it may be difficult in either case to trace its source. It is probably derived from an unconscious association with thoughts of an unknown future, and of an infinitude that quells the spirit.

The gifts and graces of atmosphere are rivalled by those of Water. Light may dance upon the liquid floor, but the darkness lurking below is only made more startling, shot with dim gleams, freaked with strange wavering colours, and wooing the soul with its obscure loveliness. And if, instead of searching the depths, the eye dwells only on the glittering surface, see how the sparkles dwindle and are lost in the receding distance, till there is but another sky spread out beneath, answering in mysterious beauty to the cope above. Atmosphere

and water alone are to Nature inexhaustible treasuries of pathetic symbol; and, to turn for a moment from one function of atmosphere to another, how remarkable is the modulation bestowed on every sound surrendered to the vastness of the air! Let but sufficient distance intervene, and there is not a note but falls into a plaintive key touching the heart with melancholy.

But the great resource of Nature for pathetic suggestion lies in that wonderful arrangement by which darkness is hourly broadening and deepening, or slowly retiring. No other attribute of visible nature except its opposite, light, is so full of symbolic meaning. Need we recal such phrases as the 'darkness of the grave,' 'the shadow,' or 'the night, of affliction and death;' or dwell upon the innumerable metaphors, figures, and figurative words in which darkness carries a mournful meaning? Look at Nature's prodigality of shade. It is but slowly, as light quivers in the east, that the powers of night withdraw, lingering behind each ridge of hill and loth to quit the plain; retaining, even to the height of noon, their haunts of darkness under rock, and tree, and leaf, and blade, and pebble; and rolling into the illuminated sky masses of cloud to steep in gloom successive spaces of the landscape; and then, as the briefly conquering sun declines, returning with all their troop to spread tracts of darkness, like a purple tide swelling upon the hills, and islanding them one after another, till suddenly, sweeping into the sky itself, they wrestle with expiring day, that dies,—yielding to night.

At this last hour of the conflict, Nature rises to the supreme of pathos. The light—each moment more subdued; the colours—each moment multiplied a thousand fold, and yet chastened till their mingled beauty and mystery oppress the very heart; the avenues of distance that seem stretching to infinity under the arching heavens; the forms pencilled to the extremest delicacy of detail as illumination falls behind them, or melted into masses of gloom below; the red disc of the sinking sun sending forth far-reaching rays, like last long sighs;—every possible source of pathos is here exhausted, and it touches the dullest souls.

Nature, no doubt, provides in abundance symbols of joy in bright and beautiful things, and we always speak of daylight as cheerful. It is so; but the buoyancy it brings is chiefly physical. Simple daylight does not affect the imagination. High noon is the tame portion of the day, which becomes expressive only as light withdraws, or as it is broken with contrasts. A transient gleam that flits across a landscape is worth acres of sunshine.* And then, an excess of beauty, whether it be in form or colour, in individual loveliness, or that

* Gilpin's forgotten landscape volumes, and especially the posthumous one entitled 'Day,' are crowded with illustrations of the expressiveness that belongs to half-lighted scenes. The last-named work, in which the forms are only rudely blotted in, is yet full of the poetry of landscape. He was one of the first in England to appreciate the true grandeur of mountains; and, if I mistake not, had much to do in preparing the public mind for that access of passion towards Highland scenery in particular, which the genius of Scott so thoroughly roused.

of one wide scene, excites an inexplicable yearning much akin to pain.

May we not say indeed, if we observe it closely, there is scarcely a joy in nature but springs from a past, or gilds a present sorrow, or that trembles upon the verge of dissolution? For nothing is more manifest in nature than mutability. The transitoriness of all beautiful forms and colours is no less impressive than their momentary beauty. And not only changefulness, but decay and death. Amidst all her unceasing juvenescence, she keeps constantly before us images of death. In a thousand expressive lines and tender tints she registers decay. 'These all perish in the using,' is her perpetual motto.

It is indeed the moral of the history she writes upon every object capable of carrying such a record; a history which, howsoever often effaced, is always begun anew, and is always telling of the past, always calling to mind departed time, life that has played its part, things that are done with. Such is especially the purport of all that is time-worn and venerable in Nature, from the grey twisted trunk of a thousand-year-old oak to the scarred mountain side speaking of uncounted ages gone. The picturesqueness of an object depends chiefly upon the story it tells; and it is the story that makes every picturesque thing pathetic.

We may be reminded, however, that Nature is quite as much hopeful and prophetic as retrospective and sorrowful. Nay, she is indeed more so. The 'silver

lining' to the cloud is proverbial, and every growing dawn, every ray that breaks through opposing darkness, and even the last gleam of day, brings its presage of eventual victory. No less does every bud—every assertion of invincible life in vegetation. But prophecy, however hopeful in its burden, is yet essentially pathetic; for it implies a present absence of the thing hoped for, and it directs the mind towards a distant and imperfectly apprehended future. Whatever then the promise that Nature gives of ultimate joy and triumph, there is still a pathos in her utterance.

And now, should it surprise us to find Nature so pathetic, when, as we well know, tears come from a deeper source than laughter; when no character, national or individual, is recognised as noble that does not possess a large capacity for sadness; when no noble work is wrought, but out of more or less of suffering and sorrow; when no artistic creation is of the highest order that does not touch the pathetic chord in the human heart? Is not this pathos in perfect sympathy with that natural religion which prompts us to ponder over the transitory conditions and changeful character of human life; which looks towards the darkness of the grave, and wistfully beyond it; which is conscious of infirmity, imperfection, incompleteness, unfulfilled aims, and broken purposes—of pain and sin; which gazes upward in vague consciousness of an Infinite Power; in vague imaginings of Infinite Attributes?

Is it less in harmony with that Christianity which from a greater height, and in a clearer atmosphere, gazes upon yet more and darker problems, and which has for its central thought the consecration of sorrow? Or again with that advanced civilisation which finds the conditions of life to be ever growing in complication and difficulty?

And if this deep-lying sadness only finds occasional expression; if small token of it occurs in many works of literature and art; if the surface of social life is only gay or busy—yet all great souls—the men whose genius makes them representatives of the race—have given it utterance, doing so in virtue of their keener insight, more sensitive nature, and gifts of expression. They reveal the latent consciousness to itself; they bring a voice out of the depths, which otherwise would only be heard in extremity; and they anticipate sensibilities that spread with mental culture and moral sensitiveness.

And as our modern mind is subjected to a greater breadth of culture, and becomes more sensitive to sadness, so does it become more conscious of Nature's pathetic sympathy. In hours of full-pulsed life indeed, of employment or enjoyment, we may be insensible to her pictures, or seize only that which suits us—the brightness, the stir, the luxury. Nor will the true heart-breathings of Nature be appreciated in the same degree by different temperaments. On a larger scale it has been so with different races of men and

different periods. In the Classic ages, the whole cast of thought and circumstance was adverse to the contemplation of any but cultured nature. The Hebrews and other cognate races understood it better; but the former were too much wrapt in their sublime monotheism, and the latter too beset with polytheistic notions, to dwell upon the panorama of the natural world except for occasional illustration, and as an accompaniment to mythologic personages. The wider but more mournful spirit of Christianity seems to have been the first to appreciate Nature in herself and her answering sadness, helped by the enforced familiarity of its early votaries with mountains and wildernesses, and the meditative habits they fostered.* The Teutonic and Northern nations brought with them a native sympathy for the wild and grand in nature, which seems indeed to have been the inspiring genius of Gothic art and architecture; while it is hard to believe, that if the abbey walls were reared at first in the wooded dell for the sake of its seclusion, and the fish of its stream, the

* Humboldt in his 'Cosmos' (vol. ii. p. 28) quotes, in connection with this subject, the interesting letter of Basil from his mountain retreat, showing a full appreciation of romantic beauty and its pensive suggestiveness; while a passage from his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, not only recognises the sweet melancholy of an extensive prospect: 'When I behold each craggy hill, each valley and each plain, . . and in the distance the sea towards which the wandering cloud is sailing, my mind is possessed with a sadness not devoid of enjoyment;'—but, anticipating Pascal, he detects the true source of the sadness: 'Whoso gazes through these with the inward eye of the soul, feels the littleness of man in the greatness of the universe.'

charm of those lovely spots did not touch all gentle souls that dwelt there. Still, as the early Christian sentiment, born of the wilderness, died out in contact with Roman life in cities, so in presence of the regained ascendancy of Rome under its ecclesiastical Cæsars, the Northern feeling for nature could not flourish. The current of religious ideas and the habits and conditions of life were all against it. The mediæval appreciation of landscape was fluctuating and isolated, shown only in the glimpses and peeps of scenery that here and there light up the works of the greater poets. It needed a breaking up of the entire system of things inherited from the old forms of civilisation, and the introduction of a new platform of thought to originate the modern feeling with regard to landscape.

It was, in fact, a new world in nature, and a new world in thought, that rose to view at the same time. The bark of Columbus broke the bounds of the old intellectual horizon, as well as that of the waters; while, at the same time, the world of ancient art and learning being disclosed, in every direction the prospect widened. In the larger space the old ideas could not live. Whatever name be given to it—Rationalism, the Spirit of Freedom, Protestantism—a new style of thought came up, resulting in the development of the individual, and his immediate contact with the sublimest facts. The round world with all its wonders was opened to him; he was free

to conquer what he could of it, and he conquered much else in the process. No doubt many helpful stays and props were removed; his narrow house fell suddenly about his ears, and left him somewhat homeless; but he found himself under the open heaven, and in the immediate presence of the Infinite One.

Hitherto the contracted bounds of knowledge had rendered all religious conceptions very definite and literal, just as we find them in the uninstructed minds of to-day. Religion was definite in dogma, definite in ceremonial, definite and literal in its representations of the unseen world. But this definiteness could not hold its ground. Milton is grandly indistinct by the side of Dante, and now Milton is far too definite for us. The old ideas held strongly to the visible and local—this or that shrine, or sacred spot, or relic; but for the European man, these things began to shrivel in estimation. There was a Diviner presence everywhere, and the local habitation became less important in his eyes. Naturally a gross anthropomorphism had accompanied the definite ideas of former times. A human shape seemed visibly to sit upon the circle of the heavens, with a surrounding hierarchy in very likeness of the court of Pope or Emperor. Tutelary saints swarmed upon the earth, and devils beneath it. But with the new and vaster scene of things, in the opening of which Galileo in a different field followed Columbus, nobler conceptions came in however slowly. The Father of spirits filled a loftier throne, and yet was nearer to each

individual soul. Saints and angels, and even devils, began to retire from their functions.

It followed from the definiteness of the old religious ideas and their literal, local, and human garb and acceptation, that they were readily expressed in art, as in them art found its almost exclusive field. The art of Paganism, the art of Christianity, alike found subjects in religious thought, because religious thought lent itself especially to art. It naturally expressed itself in the picture, the statue, in visible symbols, and actual forms. These were its great means of instruction, because, what it had to teach could be thus adequately represented. Orcagna's frescoes depicted simple verities to the beholder of his day. The supplanting style of thought is as distinctively poetic rather than artistic, and is in the same degree less susceptible of pictorial illustration. It delights in ideals, abstractions, spiritual experiences, incapable of being rendered to the eye. It paints a history of the soul, or the Christian life, not in fresco or mosaic, but in a Pilgrim's Progress or a Christian Year.

No doubt across all this stream of thought, mingling with and frequently diverting it, there came the cold current of the Renaissance. If the opening of Greek and Roman literature helped towards greater freedom, it also introduced a foreign and unreal element, which, in contrast with the simplicity of the ages of faith, as they are called, looks like a sad perversion. Yet this was but an incidental and confusing circumstance,

which could not alter the general set of things towards Nature in her teachings and her sympathies, rather than towards Church dogma and symbolic Art.

Following this more poetic tendency, religious feeling gradually deserted the pictured walls of the church, and betook itself to the temple of Nature. It turned away from the bedizened shrine to seek 'the great world's altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God.' It recurred to the old Semitic sympathies for natural scenery. Refusing to accept from sculpture or painting, or any form of man's device, adequate representations of spiritual realities, the modern mind resorts to Nature for a sanctuary, and to Nature for all the aids to worship.* And then the freeness of theological and moral speculation, the vastness of physical discovery, and habitual converse with the spiritual side of things, have each had their part in turning contemplation towards the sublime and mysterious in Nature. The great abysses that have been opened in thought have found their welcome counterpart in cloud-filled chasms and blue depths. Daring imaginations sympathise with the pure, aspiring alp-peak; far-reaching speculations with dim, illimitable distances. Landscapes of rich, tamed, obedient beauty—limited,

* I am not forgetful of that reaction towards mediæval symbolism that has taken place in modern times; but the true spirit of the age can be recognised in the mind of the most venerated leader of that reaction. To the author of the 'Christian Year' Nature is the great sanctuary for devout thought, and he draws thence all his imagery.

man-bedecked, and tutored—will not satisfy the mood that seeks to be alone with God, and to search out the hiding of his power.

Nor can any widening of the mental horizon take place without an accompanying sadness. The mere parting with old and familiar landmarks is something, and there is an inevitable wistful shudder at the first encounter with the dim uncertainty of a newly opened scene. To such a condition of mind the agonies of saints and martyrs are altogether alien. The spectacle of them affords no consolation. Trials such as theirs are too definite and physical to move the sympathy of those who stand at the threshold of unknown worlds—above, around, within. Beyond, too, the immediate effect of enlarged perceptions, every rise in mental dignity and power seems to enhance capacity for, and to offer the more avenues for sadness. To all such the pathos of Nature is inexpressibly grateful.

But there was another influence at work resulting from the change. There was more large poetry in the cast of thought, but also more realism. The theologic mode of looking at things, using the term in a certain sense, was gone, the metaphysical was going, and Nature was being frankly looked at as a series of facts, and as an interesting spectacle. Geographical and physical discovery alike conduced to this result, by making men more at home in the world, and familiarising them with all its aspects in every zone, and with

many secrets of Nature's working. The difference must needs be immense between the condition of those who only felt safe in the immediate company of tutelary and familiar deities, whose effigies studded every street and grove, and to whom, beyond that charmed circle, all was confused jurisdiction and elemental war,—to whom Nature was no vast whole ruled by an ordered purpose, but a house of many chambers with many mysterious tenants; and that of those to whom the world is open, one world of One God, and purged of any other terrors than those of physical circumstance and human or animal savagery, and who are thus put entirely at ease in contemplating phenomena and Nature's scenic splendours. And though now that 'Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire,' and the whole rout of monsters have been driven away; now that horizons hide no mysteries, seas hold no 'islands of the blest,' nor deserts shelter 'men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders'—imagination has lost something of vividness and stimulus, yet it has taken a higher range instead. The Real has given it a sounder basis, and it has gained in grandeur what it has lost in the marvellous.

And, with the progress of civilisation, the means increase for safely viewing the sublimities of Nature, and the natural perils follow the supernatural towards extinction. The steamship and the railroad, with what they bring with them, are daily removing from our path the physical difficulties, as the dangers from

barbarous men are by the same means, and the swift-handed power of civilised governments, being reduced to a minimum. We can pause now in the defile, and analyse the purple of its depths, instead of hurrying through with finger on trigger; we can camp in the desert and moralise at sunset where formerly all thought was concentrated upon the night-watch; we can leisurely sketch the waterfall with no remembrance of a Rob Roy except as a romantic decoration; and thus our impressions of the grand and beautiful in Nature are allowed to calmly settle in our minds, and form a constant substratum for poetic emotion.

But what has been the effect upon Art of all this movement? As to the Realism it gendered, and which in literature may be traced in the Shakspearian drama and much else, its influence in art is first seen in colour —that glorious stream of colour flowing through the Venetian, Flemish, Spanish, and English schools; and, next, in the perception of the dramatic interest of human life and of the human figure. The facts of life became interesting in the same degree as the facts of nature, and portraiture, domestic, and even 'still life,' became departments of art; while, instead of dealing with legends, doctrines, and symbols, what strictly religious art remained took up the Scripture narratives as historical scenes. It was a Realism, let us remember, that though dealing familiarly with Nature, could treat her not the less imaginatively and broadly;

and was therefore quite distinct from the minute and feebly imitative treatment of earlier periods; a Realism which also might easily sink towards a mean or a sensuous level.

But it was in Landscape that, under the new conditions of thought and life, art faculty found its most peculiar, and in some respects its most elevated, sphere. The realistic eye was opened upon Nature, and the larger poetic feeling recognised the infinite expressiveness of scenery. Art found a new faith and discovered a new field, bringing to its contemplation, as time went on, all the modern fulness of culture, with its pensive retrospections, its sighing aspirations, its critical self-consciousness, its perception of hitherto undreamt-of heights and depths of speculation, its sensitiveness to every form of physical and moral evil—and finding there inexhaustible sympathy.

Of course it cannot be supposed that the masters of landscape art have always been individually possessed of these ideas, and conscious of the pathos of Nature. That may have been but seldom the case, while nevertheless their art was full of pathos. They, like all intellectual workers, are influenced by, and work for, the sentiment of their age, and the character of their productions shows what that sentiment really is.

So far then we would claim for Landscape art and its recognition of the pathetic in nature a just and noble origin. It is not a morbid but a true development of

thought. But there is something in the passion for scenery, and the amazing extension of Landscape art amongst ourselves, that demands a further word, since we cannot but connect these in some measure with tendencies not altogether healthy, and conditions of society by no means admirable. It is often, in a very moody fit, a natural reaction in the midst of its busy, anxious, eager course, that this civilisation of ours inquires of the Past, wondering a little contemptuously how people did without their steam and their electricity in the old days, but almost fancying they may have been all the happier. It is too through an apparently inevitable cramping of creative power in advanced societies, that the critical faculty is correspondingly developed, and exercises itself among the accumulating memorials of past ages. Owing also in part to the monotonous mechanism of modern life, the sensational incidents and picturesque accompaniments of historical events become very attractive. From all these causes the heart of the modern world yearns towards the Past; and, as one consequence, all the sites and scenes that have rendered it illustrious are searched out and dwelt upon with much show of melancholy, and the ruins of all lands, by sunset, twilight, moonlight, cover our exhibition walls. The sentiment they gratify is not in all respects wholesome; and the passion for historical association, which is the essence of the picturesque, becomes almost a disease.

And then one of the necessities of modern life is to

herd people together by the million, and to pen them up close. Inevitably they become sadly wearied of each other, and the more so that their daily business is carried on under a darkened sky, amidst walls blackened with smoke, and fields strewn with cinders, —desolations of their own making. No wonder that they gasp for fresh air, free spaces, Nature's pure colours, and peaceful solitudes. The doleful monotony of modern life—the monotony of the rail and the omnibus, of the desk and the dinner—also does its part, by compelling its jaded victims to seek when they may, the changefulness of Nature, and to court even her most stormful moods; or if they shrink from the actual encounter, to refresh their imaginations with prints and pictures of what is wild and terrible. And, besides the monotony, the work is harder. The mill not only goes round and round, but it goes faster and faster. The lord of the elements may think he has yoked them to his car, but the result looks much as if they had yoked him. They know no fatigue, nor must he. And so the calm of Nature, or the tumults of Nature, are alike soothing to his spirit; while yet it must be confessed that ideas of speed and competition so possess the holiday seeker, that he often hurries through the fairest or the sublimest landscapes, and fails to be soothed at all. Nor, indeed, should it ever be forgotten, that the most elevating, as well as most soothing, influences belong quite as much to the simplest scenes.

Again; it is certain that civilisation in our present form of it develops new and complicated social problems, that are sufficiently afflictive to thoughtful and benevolent minds—minds that, under its influence, have become even morbidly sensitive. A sense of hideous entanglement and of helpless disorder oppresses them, as they survey surrounding evils, to which the solitudes of Nature, where man is not, are a necessary relief, as her solemn aspects are calming and consoling. Shakspeare depicts something of this feeling in the melancholy Jacques; but the condition of the over-crowded and hunger-bitten populations of our age creates many a 'Jacques,' not so selfish, and more justly melancholy.

Such peculiar circumstances of our time may account for much of the present passion; but to these must be added a vast amount of mere affectation, that catches the tone and follows the ways that Literature and Art have taken. So that, although under modern influences a distinct tourist class has arisen, a fact very significant of the place that scenery now holds in our estimation, yet the majority of tourists are far from having any genuine perception of landscape beauty.

Were it otherwise, they would not flock as they do to fashionable centres, and make the table d'hôte hour the crisis of the day. Were it otherwise, we should not find spring the season for city pleasures; nor would the mass of cultivated people show such

strange insensibility to the charm of a winter landscape, which in the variety, delicacy, and harmony of its tints far exceeds that of summer; and which in the intricate tracery that the stripped trees display against a clear sky, possesses a feature of special loveliness. High summer with its gauds is appreciated by indiscriminating tastes and very earthly appetites.

Lastly, affecting the landscape preferences of the day, as everything else, there is a vulgar sensuousness —a craving for stage effect and startling contrasts, which leads to much vicious art of the popular sort; while the enormous facilities for cheap production keep up a continual stream of stock conventionalities.

We have tried, in a few sentences, to depict a great change and its consequences—that which is noble and true in it, that which is artificial or temporary. It remains to point out that all this began to be during the lifetime of Titian. In the year of his birth, 1477, Caxton's printing press began to work at Westminster. In 1492, when he was fifteen years old, the New World across the waters rose to view. By the time he was forty-five, the globe had been circumnavigated. In his fortieth year, the Reformation first took shape. The Council of Trent was opened when he was sixty-eight, a period in so long a life little beyond maturity. The Dutch Republic became during his mid years an accomplished fact. Religious art may be said to have expired with the close of the fifteenth

century and with Titian's boyhood. During his early years in Venice, the Aldine press poured forth its editions of the classics. These dates help to show how the great painter stood at the point of divergence of modern thought, and to explain how he became the artist of Nature instead of Religious symbol. Religion, as it was understood by Giotto, Orcagna, and Fra Angelico, could no longer move him. Perhaps his last earnest work of this sort was his boyish fresco at Cadore. The Genova picture at twenty-one shows, in the simply 'handsome' Madonna, a significant difference. Saints had been exhibited in all possible combinations, and had ceased to be affecting. The celestial hierarchy had declined in majesty and reality, as earthly hierarchies were shaken or disgraced. The future had lost its vividness—the brightness and the darkness alike—amidst the splendour of discovery in the new world of Nature—in the old world of Thought. It was plain that the soul of Art must betake itself elsewhere.

It is true that the great Florentine and Roman schools still threw their energies into religious art. They made it a magnificent vehicle for design, composition, expression; but in their hands it was no longer religious. Classic art was the true source of their inspiration, while the cartoons of Raphael mark the new tendency towards Realism. Titian, too, and his Venetian contemporaries, compelled by the traditions of art and the demands of patrons, worked in

the same field, and were influenced in some degree by the Renaissance; but they breathed the very spirit of Nature. The City of the Sea was the centre of the commerce of the world; the seas, the skies of many lands, the manners of many nations, were familiar to its people. They stood apart from the political and ecclesiastical trammels of other states, and they were not so surrounded by the memorials of ancient art as to be ruled by them. They were citizens of the world; they handled and gathered the wealth of the world; they were liberal in thought, cultivated in taste, sensuous in temperament, and were thus prepared to appreciate, or rather they necessarily developed, art that was full of nature and full of colour.* To them came Titian from his mountains with a capacity for apprehending the grandeur—we may call it the religion—of Nature, and in particular the poetry of Colour. It were easy to have rested in the mere luxury of that seductive attribute, in the blaze, the play, the opposition of

* How thoroughly they appreciated Nature is shown in one of Aretino's letters to Titian, where he describes himself, after supping discontentedly alone, 'or rather with a quartan ague for companion,' leaning half out of his window to watch a boat-race on the Grand Canal, but speedily attracted towards the splendour of a sunset casting wonderful reflections upon the buildings below and the clouds above, and enhanced by the darkness of some accidental smoke or vapour, hung across the heavens like a curtain. He analyses the colours: 'There appeared in certain places a green azure, in others an azure green, composed according to the caprice of that master of masters—Nature; so that,' says he, 'I called out two or three times, "O Titian, where art thou?" Do we not find here the true source of Venetian art, so glowing and yet so subdued.'

colours. Inferior art abounds in this obvious appreciation; nay, a powerful hand like that of Rubens may reach no higher. Titian was almost alone—and later times have not robbed him of that eminence—in seizing its solemn magnificence, taking his inspiration from those moments in Nature, when her pomp is full of mystery and her splendour is soul-subduing. Under such an illumination, gorgeous but serene, and pathetic in suggestion, he viewed every subject; so that, when he depicted a great lord's mistress, she reposed in the midst of a chastened lustre that veiled her loveliness; even the revels of a Bacchanal were rebuked by the tones of earth and sky; and it was as in the pensive twilight of some great day that princes, senators, and soldiers were rendered to posterity.

But in treating the indispensably sacred and ecclesiastical subjects of his time, the distinctive character of his genius was most apparent. Regardless of the proper religious aspect of these he went into Portraiture and Landscape. Comparing him with the Florentines and Romans in his sacred pieces, we must be struck with the fact that, for grand ideal figures, he substituted noble living portraiture, so far falling short of his subject indeed, but importing another source of interest, and, as we know, eventually bestowing upon portraiture alone, that combined poetic and realistic dignity which raised it into a distinct department of art. The same comparison displays no less his special taste for landscape. That which is sacred in his sacred pictures is

not the countenances of the saints,* men and women of the time, however nobly rendered, however glorified with colour; he reaches true poetic elevation, he rises into pathetic suggestion, in the spaces of his canvas heretofore filled with heterogeneous though sometimes sweet conceits—in his mountains, trees, and skies. No more pertinent instance of this can be quoted than the destroyed Peter Martyr, where (speaking of it as a thing that cannot perish altogether from the world), though the figures are vigorous and dramatic enough, the soul of the picture breathes in the landscape. At first sight it might almost be taken for a gigantic study of trees, whose strenuous and contorting stems lift their masses of foliage against the alternate glare and gloom of a cloudy sky, while the hills along the horizon answer to the changeful light above. The murder in the foreground would have little to say to us, but for the whispering forest, the lonely mountains, and the brooding sky. The two boy angels, in their perfect naturalism, are an entirely extraneous charm.†

* There are always exceptions to every general statement, and the existence of such a picture as the 'Entombment' in the Louvre, necessarily qualifies the above remark. Nothing can be more 'sacred' than the feeling of that picture, and especially of the countenance, veiled at once in pallor and in shadow, of the dead Saviour. But here the subject was distinctly historic, and seized upon Titian's imagination as such. The landscape, the grouping, the action, are all in harmony with the actual tragic fact. It is sacred because it is real.

† The small town, nestled among trees at the foot of the hills, does

In his earlier subjects, and in most of his drawings, the figures occupy almost as little space in relation to the landscape as in Claude or Wilson; they supply only a title to the piece. The exigencies of his profession, and the richness of his flesh tints, probably drew him towards compositions where the proportion is reversed; but wherever he has room for a sky and a hill, or for trees making their fret against the sky, they are there. No doubt he rarely fulfilled the conditions of pure landscape painting as stated in the outset of these remarks; the landscape is seldom itself the subject; but he showed how worthy it was of such treatment, by the way in which he dealt with it—by his perception of the majesty of mountains, the moving magnificence of clouds, the pensive beauty of twilight, the fleeting changes of sunshine and shade, and the glory of sunset.

Is it needful to point out what pathos there is in all this? Most certainly it was the predominating sentiment he found in Nature. His pictures breathe it in chastened colours, sombre shades, and flitting lights. But even his drawings, where he is helped by no colour and very slight suggestion of shadow, are yet pervaded by a singular melancholy. In this respect, while entirely devoid of humour, they somewhat resemble Bewick's works. There is the same suggestion of a solitary and partly wild country; the same frequent

not render them less lonely; and it brings in the idea of peace and security, in contrast with the immediate terror of the foreground.

introduction of rain or gathering blackness; the same fancy for ruined walls and towers, or sequestered and often dilapidated farmhouses; the same liking for lonely travellers—in Titian's case, not seldom monks or hermits. The man of the Tyne and the man of Cadore, full of local feeling as they are, read the same thought in Nature. Mr. Ruskin puts Titian at the head of romantic landscape; and is not the subtlest essence of romance a noble melancholy?

In all this, as we have endeavoured to show, he was the son of his age—the son, and therefore in advance of it. But we may trace more immediate and personal influences. First among these, that he was native-born to mountains, by far the most soulfull objects in nature; and next, that their familiar peaks lay along the horizon upon which his city window opened. The latter circumstance was perhaps of more importance than the former, for certainly, with mountains, distance lends enchantment, and brings out all their poetry. No doubt other of the great contemporary painters came from hilly regions who never showed the same sympathies. But their native districts were generally far away from the scenes of their art-triumphs; or, if not so distant, were hidden from them. Walls and guarded gateways shut off the tender distances, or peaks that might have claimed an ancient friendship. Roads alike dusty and dangerous discouraged acquaintance with them; and so they became absorbed in the brilliant life of cities, and the noise and stir drove out the me-

mory of Nature's silent scenes. Far otherwise with Titian. He lived where the waters lapped against his garden walls, where no dust thickened the air, no rattle of wheels or horsehoofs disturbed the calm; and where at favourable moments his Cadore peaks stood forth distinct and glowing, waking in his heart pensive memories and wistful longings.

Who else of his time has given us beyond a level expanse of water—beyond its distant shore—a sharp purple line of mountains more distant still? It was done by no one else, because none like him lived with such a scene before him, and had his heart there.

But do such sympathies seem all out of place in splendid Venice? Not so when the era of Titian's life-work is remembered, and the relation Venice held to it. In that age of geographical discovery, the imaginations of men brooded over distant and strange lands, and while the fierce Spaniard was absorbed in the practical work of conquest, none better than the cultured and travelled Venetian would be competent to appreciate the romance of unknown seas, and shores, and mountain wildernesses. And if we are reminded that, to the same Venetians, Paul Veronese afterwards displayed only the gorgeousness of jewelled garments, and the luxury of deftly folded drapery, it may be replied that the riches of the New World, more than its mysteries, then filled the thoughts of Venice as of all Europe.

But the chief source of landscape inspiration, after

all, lay in the man. He saw, he felt, in advance of his age. Whatever he may have owed to the technical instructions of the German and Flemish artists who frequented Venice, the sympathy with Nature's changeful moods was all his own. And much of it died with him for a time. Tintoretto, no doubt, possessed a very similar apprehension of Nature; but his tempestuous spirit shows itself in his works, in striking contrast with the profound serenity of Titian. Of the later leaders of landscape, Poussin, Claude, and Salvator, the first brought academical principles rather than poetic sympathy to the study of landscape; the second could only feel the sweetness and the calm of Nature; the last dealt only with the romance of melodramatic incidents. Titian finds his true followers at last among the nature-loving painters of our northern isle.

'Il divino Tiziano!' It is a title which, if often lavishly and therefore undeservedly bestowed, a true instinct has, nevertheless, confined to those only who in whatever measure respond in spirit to the Divine Presence brooding in the realm of Nature. It is denied to the general or statesman, the man of action in the affairs of mankind; it is accorded to the poet or the artist, the man of meditative thought and utterance. Great amongst these Titian is thus 'divine,' and surely it is more fitting to bid him farewell here from the summit of Monte Zucco, than before the marble pomp of his tomb in Venice;—here,

in his native Cadore; here where at this evening hour the purple Pelmo and the saffron sky, and the crimson cloud glow with his own colours;—here, where no sound reaches except the faint notes of some village vesper-bell, telling of a sorrow and a destiny that explain something to our hearts of Nature's pathos and mystery—a mystery and a pathos which this Son of Cadore was the first to bring within the domain of Art.

APPENDIX.

ASCENTS OF THE CADORE MOUNTAINS.

THERE is a certain incongruity between the Titian aspect of mountains and the point of view characteristic of the Alpine Club. Yet an account of Cadore would be incomplete without some mention of the conquests effected of late years by both English and German invaders over her mountain peaks.

When we first visited Cadore, the people strenuously denied that the Antelao had ever been ascended; and, when subsequently pressed, would only admit that a German had made the attempt, and had bribed his guide to say that he had succeeded. The ascent in question was, no doubt, that of the chief Alpine explorer of the district, Dr. Grohmann in 1863, and the Cadore people were probably all the less inclined to believe in it since the cleft in the 300 feet of final precipice, which alone made success possible, was discovered by a Cortina man in Dr. Grohmann's service. Jealousy of the Ampezzani is of old date in Cadore. In 1864, Lord F. Douglas, who perished on the Matterhorn the following year, accomplished the ascent in company with Mr. F. L. Latham. The guide on both occasions was Matteo Ossi of Resinego, a village almost adjoining San Vito. The ascents have been made from this direction, since the first part of the way follows the easy track to the summit of the Forcella Piccola, the narrow isthmus connecting the Antelao with the great mountain masses to the north. Over this there lies a short cut to Cadore, coming down upon the village of Calalzo on the Cadore side, which was used by Austrian troops in 1848. From this col, the long ridge which meets the eye in the view from S. Vito (p. 233), can be gained with little difficulty, and then the ascent is only tedious till the foot of the summit pinnacle is reached. This presents the single serious obstacle, but the above-mentioned cleft renders it of small moment to practised mountaineers. The view hitherto obtained has been exceedingly spoiled by clouds, but as in September I have seen the peak absolutely clear for several days

together, a better choice of season would probably secure what must necessarily be a splendid panorama. Mr. F. Tuckett was beaten back by weather in 1866. The height of the Antelao is estimated at 10,850 feet, and the time to be allowed from S. Vito and back is twelve hours.

A day or two previous to the ascent of Lord F. Douglas and his friend, of whose proximity we were unaware, Mr. Churchill and I climbed the Forcella Grande (7,536 feet), a singular notch in the precipices of the Croda Malcora, at right angles to the Forcella Piccola, and at a much greater height. From this, the view of the Antelao is very striking; but it is still more so from one of the pinnacles of the Malcora overlooking the Ampezzo valley, which offers also a magnificent view of the whole Ampezzo, and of the great dolomite masses on the west, amongst which the Pelmo stands out with pre-eminent majesty. By the Forcella Grande, which is best reached from the village of Chiapuzza above S. Vito, a very interesting descent may be made into the upper valley of Auronzo, skirting the north front of the Marmarolo.

The Marmarolo has not yet yielded to any English assailant, nor does it seem to have been attempted by Dr. Grohmann. It presents, indeed, such an array of peaks and horns, that it must be difficult to select the true, or the most rewarding summit. The ascent, however, is stated in Mr. Ball's guide to have been made in 1867, by Cavaliere Somano, with a Calalzo man, Giuseppe Toffoli, for guide. A large picture by Mr. Walton of this mountain, under the crimson glow of sunset, taken from near Villa Grande in Val Auronzo, does it more than justice from that point, but does not exceed the impression it produces from other directions, especially from that of the Misurina pass, where its aspect is very fine.

The peaks on the north-eastern side of Val Auronzo are very obscurely known. I can confirm Mr. Tuckett's statement that the Oberbacher Thal, descending on the Tyrol side towards Sexten, shows 'the tremendous crags and fantastic aiguilles, characteristic of the dolomites in the highest perfection.' He crossed from Auronzo by Val Marson and Val Cengia, the latter leading to a col between the Agnello and the Patern Kogel. But another route might be taken more directly from Auronzo and on the southern side of the Col Agnello which might prove of even greater interest. The Col Agnello and Monte Popera are two summits which invite the Alpine climber

in this direction. The former should be approached from Auronzo, (where there is now a fair inn), the latter would be taken to most advantage from the inn on the summit of the Monte Croce pass. To the south of Monte Popera is a very noble mountain mass, for which this pass, or one of the upper villages of the Cadore district of Comelico, would make a good starting-point. The topography and nomenclature of this Auronzo group are alike exceedingly confused, and Mr. Ball's request for further information will, it is hoped, be soon responded to. The same may be said of the Terza Grande group to the south of Sappada, presenting from that village very romantic forms.

The inferior but striking summits of Monte Cornon, Monte Cridola, the Cima di Laris, and Monte Duranno, on the eastern frontier of Cadore, ranging between 8 and 9,000 feet in height, all await exploration by those who can enjoy the excitement of rock clambering; and the two last would display to view the little known Friulian group, of which Monte Premaggiore is the centre. The grandeur of these Friulian peaks much impressed me, whenever, as in the excursion to Cimolais, and from the valley of the Tagliamento, I have been in their neighbourhood. A very fine excursion might be made from Cadore by Monte Vedorchia and over a well-marked col leading into Val Meluzzo, at the foot of the Premaggiore, and descending to the village of Cimolais, where there is a tolerable inn, through scenery of a high order.

The Sasso di Pelmo, the rival of the Antelao, and far more remarkable in structure, rising as it does in walls of natural masonry on all sides, some of them 2,000 ft. without a break, offers a much more difficult problem to the mountaineer. Yet the chamois hunters of the Val di Zoldo have found means, by following the ledges, that from below resemble courses of the original Titan work, to reach the summit from no less than four different points. Mr. Ball is still, I believe, the only Englishman who has achieved the ascent. He started from Borca, and describes (p. 525, *Alpine Guide*, 3rd vol.) his passage along one of these ledges, where at one point it was necessary to advance 'reptile fashion.' At last the great hollow, shown in pl. 33, was reached, when the ascent of the gigantic staircase it offers was not difficult. The real topmost ridge is, however, a troublesome piece of climbing up disintegrated rock. The height of this mountain is given at 10,377 ft.

The Civita (10,440), or as authorities now prefer to spell it, Civetta, is scarcely in Cadore territory, but as, excepting only the Pelmo, it is the grandest object in Cadore scenery, mention may be allowed of Mr. Tuckett's ascent in 1866, the first by any traveller. He started from the head of the Val di Zoldo having found night quarters at Pecol, the highest village. It is necessary to bear to the left to attain the ridge which ends in the summit. The foot of this rocky ridge was reached in three hours—through woods, then over bare and steep mountain slopes, and finally the debris of numerous avalanches. The rock climbing was the only difficulty, but chiefly from the fresh snow on the polished surfaces. The less steeply inclined upper portion of the mountain was free both from difficulty and danger, and, in about five and a half hours from Pecol, Mr. Tuckett found himself on the final ridge, and 'looking straight down that superb western rocky wall—which for absolute precipitousness has few equals—upon Alleghe and its lake, and far away to the snowy peaks of the Adamello, Presanella, Orteler, Oetzthal, and Tauern groups.' He had 'rarely seen a more exquisitely beautiful view.' On the descent the party was in great danger from an avalanche which passed within twenty feet of them on the steepest portion of the rocks, where to hold on was the only course possible. The expedition took place, however, so early as May, and the risk from this cause would probably be entirely obviated later in the season. A glacier streams down on the south-west side of the Civita, of which Mr. Tuckett only caught sight from the distant Primiero mountains. I once had a very good view of it from the Cima di Pape near Cencenighe.

The characteristic precipices of Monte Civita, lofty as they are, form but the topmost step of the mountain; beneath them is a singular shelf holding a small tarn, the Lago di Col Dai. From the brink of this shelf, which is easily reached from the pass of the Col Dai between Alleghe and Pecol, there is a view which I should judge to be more pictorially impressive than the panorama from the summit. The lake lies at a solemn depth below amongst the steep-sided hills, rising ridge above ridge, and crowned by the noble crest of the Marmolata. With such views, accessible to moderate climbers, I have been fain to be content, and with such any lover of landscape may well rest satisfied.

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